

**THE SHRIEKING CURSE OF THE VOODOO GOD**

# **HORROR STORIES**

**THE HOWLING  
GHOST OF THE  
SPIRAL STAIRCASE**

PDC

**LAMP OF THE  
LAUGHING WITCH**

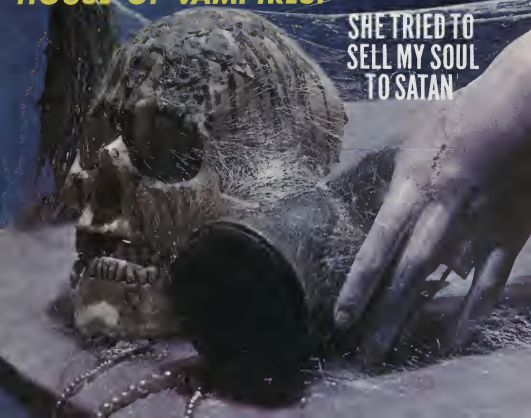
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*in the*

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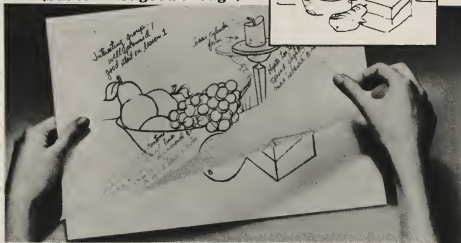
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# FEAST OF BLOOD IN THE HOUSE OF VAMPIRES

by HENRY LAWES

The demon pointed to the fresh corpse of a lovely girl. "How do you like my work? Such a pity you didn't see how she died."

Night falls, and things arise from their foul graves to strike terror in the hearts of mortals!

THE GLARING LIGHT of a noisy day left far behind, all lay in readiness for the gentle night that would give rest to weary, sun-blinded eyes. Shadows deepened, gradually growing longer until they merged with the purple twilight; stars sparkled serenely overhead; a slight breeze rustled the few remaining leaves on trees that gracefully bowed to the illumination of a full and majestic moon riding high in the heavens.

Quiet. All was as if no human being had ever been created. The soft call of a far-away bird to its mate was the only sound heard. Gentle shadows stirred by the breeze created fantastic arabesques on time-worn stones of the ancient buildings that ringed the place. Grass growing between scarred and broken flagstones danced softly in the moonlight. The world held its breath and awaited the Coming.

Inside one of the old buildings, moonbeams streamed through mulioned windows, and the delicate stone tracery wrought lacework on the uneven floor. On either side of the room lay great stone boxes. Knights, their fingers broken, reclined beside their cracked and stained ladies; an old archbishop raised a marble hand in solemn benediction; a child dressed in the heavy clothing of five hundred years ago, lay in formal mockery of sleep.

These were the landed gentry of the house, the owners, the rightful aristocracy of the kingdom. But now there were others, a newer breed who refused to follow the old ways, who





"Awake!" the creature cried. "It is time for us to be up and about the earth. New victims must be found for us."

ignored the sacred obligations of the Very King of Death himself. These upstarts had invaded the country—a day ago, a hundred years ago? And the Old ones were powerless to stop them. They could sit, lie, stand in silent disapproval, but lacked the great power of the invaders—movement!

A slight grating sound shot like a flash through the heavy gloom. A pause, then another rasp disturbed the dead silence. From off in the corner farthest from the dim opening of the barred door, a gnarled hand could be seen in the swaying moonlight. It wavered slightly, then slowly stretched grave-stained fingers gratefully. It languidly couched its way down, gave another push, and exposed a long, pale arm. The fingernails, dyed a deep vermillion, scratched the cold marble as fingertips made the long journey down the slab of stone. A final shove, and the top of a sarcophagus slid noisily to the ground. The dust settled, and a shrouded corpse—but dead no longer—sat up in the coffin. Movement disturbed the stained shroud, which fell to the interior of the box and revealed the figure of a young girl—incidentally beautiful even in half-life.

She put both hands on either side of the icy home and slowly eased herself up until she was standing. Then with a slight, graceful tug of her hands, she drew the graveclothing tight about her and stepped out. She shook her head and a few leaves blown in by the wind, fluttered down the shaggy mane.

Moonlight caught her features as she smiled a slow, secretive smile and glided toward the iron grill of the tomb. Her garments scarcely moved the leaves on the floor that made no sound when trod upon by the lovely apparition. Stopping by the gate, she smiled again, then passed like smoke through the rusted railings.

A beautiful night, but then wasn't every night lovely for a Child of the Darkness? A wolf howled far in the distance. The sound delighted her and she hastened her steps toward the adjoining mausoleum. Passing through the door she stood by a tomb that was noticeably newer than its neighbors. She waited.

More sounds of scraping. A heavy stone lid was lifted bodily. Two creatures, engaged long ago in life to be married and having kept that foggy promise even in half-death, joined her.

"Are you going?" the unattached female asked the couple in a deep, throaty voice.

"Why not?" the male answered.

"It might prove—interesting. Besides, we haven't been to one in a hundred years."

"Very well. Let us be off then."

The moon was hidden for an instant behind a huge bank of silver-grey clouds, and when it once again glowed free, it shone on the rapidly flitting figures of three huge and hideous bats whose loud squeaks echoed against the dull stones of the ancient graveyard.

The bats circled higher, moving in jerks almost as if attached to strings. Then they swooped down close to the road, their superb hearing working at top power. Perhaps an unwary traveler who was too proud or foolish to follow the wise advice of the old village women and stay home when the sun sank deep behind the hills, would be found walking alone.

The male gave a piercing squeal—there, by the fir tree! The bats moved in a frenzy. The human being saw them approach and in his blind panic, dropped the large gunny sack he had been carrying over his shoulder. It hit the

(Continued on page 38)

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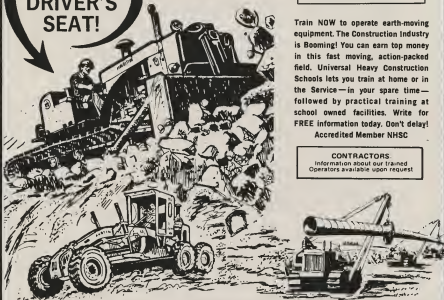
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# THE HOWLING GHOST OF THE

by GABRIEL VARNEY



(I was both amazed and flattered by the volume of mail I received from you readers. I had no idea that there were so many amateur

"Ghosts aren't logical beings, Mr. Gibbons," I said as I got up (I admit) rather stiffly. "There are hundreds of misconceptions,

"And are you quite sure the disturbance emanates from that small chamber?" Sometimes being farsighted has its advantages. I could

# SPIRAL STAIRCASE

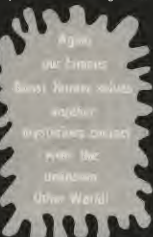
and professional ghost hunters in the United States and Canada. I guess we are all brothers in our common interest in things supernatural. With all this stride and gross misunderstanding in this world today, it does my heart good to realise deep down we can still share with one another. The editors of *Horror Stories* wish to include another of my stories in this issue. I had reservations about using the following tale—because all the characters involved are still living. You will forgive me then for this bit of deception—I have changed the names of all persons and places. The events are quite real, however, and though dismantled now, the staircase still exists. And if you enjoy my story even half as much as I enjoyed working and solving it, you'll be well pleased. Come, let us participate together in "The Case of the Spiral Stairway of Death!"—Gabriel Varney.)

"And she fell to a screaming, bloody death right here!" Mr. Edward Gibbons indicated the spot with his umbrella.

"And you say this happens every night?" I asked, bending down to inspect the dark oaken flooring in the main hall. It was unblemished, smooth, nothing to indicate a violent end.

"No—and that's the strange part of it, Mr. Varney. Quite frankly, I am beginning to accept the possibility of ghosts—what other reason could there be—but ghosts who make their appearance with absolutely no rhyme or reason? This makes no sense at all. Sometimes once, even twice a night we are visited. And then not a sound for months. It's not logical."

silly ideas and downright lies about them. Probably the most difficult aspect of my work as a ghost hunter is to break through these falsehoods and get down to the truth. People know, or think they know, how ghosts are supposed to behave. When I ask for a detailed description, my clients feed back plots to second-grade horror movies. Ghosts do not moan or groan or make any other inelegant sounds and they do not walk around festooned with chains, spare heads or flickering candles.



Now, tell me what really happens when you have a visitation."

"First a scream, but a very well-behaved one," Gibbons answered promptly, with a touch of sarcasm. "Then sounds of bare feet running, a silence, then a louder shriek of a body falling through space—and a sickening thud."

Instinctively we both glanced up the long spiral to the gallery above the fourth floor.

see perfectly each detail. The moulding, cornice, trim and arrangement of the door was exactly like its neighbors; there was nothing visibly different to mark it in any way.

"Yes, that one. The third from the left. Things have gotten so bad that I had Alice and the children move to our country place."

"Quite a remarkable stairwell, Mr. Gibbons. I don't believe I've ever seen one quite like it. Is it completely of cast iron?"

"Yes, all of it. And the railing is of rope covered with metal. As you can see, the staircase is considerably newer than the rest of the house. It was added sometime during the middle of the last century by a man who made his fortune in an iron works. Quite sturdy too, I must add."

It was a chilly, rainy day in April, and a dismantled house isn't the warmest, most pleasant place to be. Even though I was wearing a heavy greatcoat, I felt the chill of the day in every bone. Gibbons suggested our having a cup of coffee in the kitchen. Naturally I made no complaint and we walked through the empty, echoing rooms to the more pleasant kitchen at the other end of the house.

"Do you know much about the history of this place?" I asked as I poured milk into the steaming brew. "Specfres are always the spiritual manifestation of the past and such an understanding is vital."

"I explained all I know back at your office days ago. There just isn't anything else."

"I realize that, but sometimes being back at the scene of the crime, so (Continued on page 40)



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13

A shadow on the  
wall—it would never go away!

# LAMP OF THE LAUGHING WITCH

by MICHAEL PRAETORIUS

"I DON'T THINK I can do it," Maud whispered. She seemed to fade behind the livid floral print of the old-fashioned loveseat. Her hands visibly trembled over her tatting. "And it's not quite dark yet. I can still see. Please, Agnes, couldn't we wait just a little while longer?" "You know perfectly well that the lights in this house go on promptly at six o'clock. Perhaps you can still see, but I can't." She glanced down at the black crepe stuff she was sewing, then focused her hawk-like glare at the cowering form of her younger sister. "And sit up straight, for goodness sake." She turned to face her youngest sister, the baby of the family.

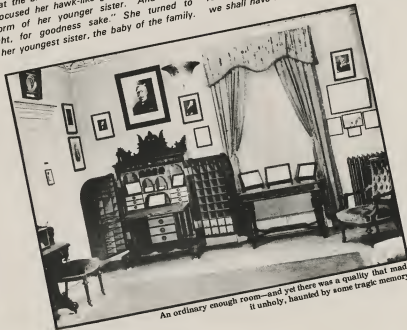
"Bess, will you light it? You're nearer than I am." The younger woman shrugged, then stood up. She was many years the junior of the seated ladies, and still in the prime of life. But cruel experience had hardened her lovely features. Bending over gracefully, she struck a match and lit the lamp.

Shadows suddenly loomed up on the walls. None of the women looked around the room. Bess nearly tripped over her long skirt in her hurry to avoid seeing anything about her. She took her place in the only comfortable chair in the parlor.

The silence was unendurable as each dared not glance up. It was Maud who finally broke it. Slowly she lifted her wrinkled face, and gasped. "Oh God, it's there again. It looks like..."

"Don't be a fool, Maud!" Agnes spoke sharply. "It is a shadow cast by something in this room, nothing more. When Henry comes back, we shall have him help

(Continued on next page)



An ordinary enough room—and yet there was a quality that made it unholy, haunted by some tragic memory.

us rearrange the room again and again and again until it goes away."

"It won't go away. After Henry was so borrid to William, William vowed never to leave—never!"

"Heaven, preserve us," Bess drawled lazily. "I believe we're spooked."

"And that will be quite enough out of you, young lady," Agnes snapped. "I've told you time and time again that your fancy New York manners have no place in this house. And put out that cigarette. You know perfectly well Father never allowed any of us to smoke—not even the boys."

Bess sighed and flicked the butt. It landed in a carved soapstone urn.

"Oh Bess, not in Mother's favorite vase. How could you," Maud gently chided. "But Agnes, the shadow is still there. It's Henry's fault. He's the one . . ."

"Anyone mention my name?" came a cold reply from the hall. Maud gasped again and bit her lip to avoid crying from vexation.

A sturdy figure entered the room. "Ladies," the man said, bowing from the waist.

"I thought you said you'd be gone for a few days, Henry," Agnes gathered the black material into a neat pile.

"I don't have to explain everything to my dear sisters, do I? After all, I'm the one who pays the bills around here. If it weren't for me, you'd have been in the poorhouse years ago. My business is exactly that—my business."

"Father said we could always live in this house. It was in his will, dear brother. Even William."

"Be quiet this instant, Maud. You know I won't tolerate to hear his name spoken here. He was lazy and a spendthrift. He spent his inheritance and I had every right in the world to, ah, to . . ." Henry fumbled for the word he wanted.

"To kick him out on his rear, sweets," Bess smilingly filled in for him. "And just look what you've brought down on our heads." She languidly pointed to the wall near the huge oak desk.

Henry cursed; then in a fit of anger, tossed his walking stick at the shadow. His aim was off, and the can brought down a framed silhouette from the wall. It smashed at Maud's feet.

She shrieked from fright.

"See what you've done, Henry. Control yourself. We're all under enough strain as it is without you adding any more. You know it must be cast by something in this room.

It has to be." Agnes stood up. "Stop crying, Maud. It is time for dinner. Come."

"I'll be by in a moment," Henry muttered as he stooped to retrieve his cane.

"Bess, if you say one more word, I'll ship you back to that no-good drunkard you married in New York. And stop sniveling, Maud." Agnes' voice clearly echoed in the hallway leading to the dining room.

Henry sat down, facing the wall opposite the desk. He sat for a long time. Then rising suddenly, he moved the sewing table. Some material fell to the floor. He impatiently kicked it away. Cursing again, he left for the dining room.

"DID YOU ALL have a pleasant time today?" Henry asked politely as he helped himself to mashed potatoes. "Well, speak up. Have you suddenly turned into mummies? I can remember the time I couldn't fit a word in edgewise."

"Very pleasant, Henry, very pleasant," Agnes broke in quickly. "Maud helped me count linens and then we went to the attic to see how many of Mother's laces were still good. Moths, you know."

"Oh yes," Maud chirped hurriedly, glad to be of some use. "And we found a whole carton of our old toys. There was your hoop, Henry, the one you painted green and gold. Although it was a little bent and some of the gilt was coming off. And your doll, Bess. What was its name—Tinker? And my old bear. And William's . . . oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to start anything."

Henry put down his fork and sighed. "All right." He stood up and said in a dangerously quiet tone of voice: "It's time for a little family discussion. I'm not stupid. I know you hate and despise me for what I did to poor, dear old harmless William. But let me remind you that he had run through his fortune and was starting on ours. Why, another few months and we would all have been paupers."

"So you threw him out of the house. You've always hated William—even when you were a child. And let me remind you of something else. Father always said that we could live here—all of us—no matter what happened," Agnes interrupted. "William died in a ginmill."

"He was so good, so kind and gentle. Surely you wouldn't have begrudged him food and shelter.

And you must have known he was dying, Henry. Poor William." Maud quickly began sobbing into her napkin.

"Don't be foolish, Maud."

"Don't be foolish, Maud," mimicked Bess. "That's all we hear around here. Well, it just so happens that I agree with her. William was the only decent one of all of us."

"You may leave the table, Bess. I've had just about enough of you for one evening. And that goes of the whole lot of you. No, sit. I'd hate to disturb you." Henry stalked to the door. Then turning around to face them, he added: "Don't any of you go into the parlor tonight. I have some repairs to make and I do not wish to be disturbed." He closed the door after him.

"Oh, Agnes, what are we going to do? I've never seen Henry in such a state before!" In her agitation, Maud upset her glass of wine. Its dark red hue spread slowly over the pure white linen tablecloth. The three ladies watched in fascination as the liquid slowly formed a pattern.

"Was that how it was for William?" murmured Bess. "Lying on a sawdust floor as his life seeped out of him. What was it they say he died of?"

"Consumption," Agnes stood up. "Bess, clear the table. And I want you to take that stain out of the cloth, Maud. Spilling things at your age. Really, it's too much."

"What was that—listen! There it is again."

They stopped moving and concentrated on the noise.

"It's Henry—it sounds as if he is taking apart the whole house!"

Glass crashed to the floor, and the black-clad ladies ran down the hall to the parlor door. It was locked.

"Henry—for God's sake, open up. What are you doing? Stop it this instant! Henry, listen to me!"

"Leave me alone, damn you! Get out of here. I have to fix something—that's all," came the breathless reply.

"Open this door, Henry!" Agnes pounded again.

It swung forward so suddenly that she was nearly pitched into the parlor.

"What is it now!" His eyes blazing, his hair falling across his forehead, Henry almost looked like a madman. The small portion of the room visible behind him showed the fury of his actions. Tables overturned, lamps broken, a

(Continued on page 46)





# LONG NIGHT IN THE HELLFIRE MANSION

Silently, it awaits the next person brave enough or foolish enough—to inhabit its echoing halls and sounding chambers!

by OBADIAH KEMPH

**H**AVE YOU EVER been in a place, somewhere, sometime, that you knew was unmistakably evil? Something about the atmosphere, the lighting, the way timber and stone were entwined to produce a picture of clinging, cloying death? Nothing you could put your finger on, nothing definite to avoid; but that hovering something, that cruel guiding genius of despair had left a mark as clearly as if it had been stamped in each crack and cornice—"Beware! Danger Ahead!"

Off on a quiet country lane in Canada sat a small

house. Not so small really, only very compact, contained, and sure of itself. It stood three stories high, had a curving driveway leading to some sort of garage directly under the summer porch, and one of those old-fashioned black iron urns out on the front lawn. You've probably seen hundreds of these sorts of houses; they were constructed by the dozens at the turn of the century. But this house was different from all the rest; it had something to set itself off from its peers.

You walk through the front door to find yourself in a short hall. To the left were the living room, library and tiny study; and to the right lay the dining room, pantry,

breakfast room and kitchen. Up the stairs next and you would be in the hall leading to three bedrooms and a bath; the second flight of stairs would lead you to the servant's suite, another bedroom, and the storeroom. A ladder in the last room would point you to the small attic above.

Nothing at all unusual; everything lay in perfect order for the new tenants, the next batch of people wanting a nice home in the country, easy to heat in the winter, and well-ventilated in summer.

A car pulled into the graveled driveway. It stopped just short of the garage. Both doors opened and two

people climbed out. They stood for a moment looking at the facade of the house.

"Oh, Rick—it's just what I've always dreamed about! Not elegant or anything, but it's real. It's a home. We can fix it up. I just know we can!"

"Sure, honey. With a little paint and maybe some bushes for the front, it'll really be something."

"Come on, let's go inside. I'm dying to look at it."

Hand in hand they walked to the front door. Rick put the key in the lock and tried to turn it. It refused to budge.

"Must be a little rusty." He

(Continued on next page)



spat on the key and inserted it again. This time they heard a soft, protesting click as the tumbler moved. He turned the knob and swung the door open.

"Wait a minute."

He picked the girl up and solemnly carried her across the threshold, gently putting her down in the hall.

She turned to him and flung her arms around his broad shoulders.

"Rick, I'm so happy, I think I'm going to cry." Tears welled up in her eyes.

He stood there clumsily, not knowing what to do. "Um, Sue, let's look at the rest of the house. Come on."

She blew her nose, smiled through her tears of joy, and agreed.

As they roamed through each room, their enthusiasm grew. A few new pieces of furniture to supplement the solid, plain things that came with the house, some rugs for the hardwood floors, and different curtains on the windows—

"And I can set up my studio on the third floor!" Rick called to Sue. "You can have as much room as you want for your loom—what luxury!"

"And only twenty minutes from Toronto," Sue said brightly, imitating the asinine broker who had sold them the house. "A gorgeous piece of property with a superb view!" She waved her hand dramatically at a window that disclosed a very old and very dead elm tree that took up most of the backyard. "Rick," She turned serious, "I'll be glad to get away from that awful apartment. It's so crowded and small and I can't keep it as clean as I want."

"I know, dear. We'll have enough room here to work. And not a roach in sight—even though we probably have mice."

"Mice I can stand, but roaches—ugh!" She shuddered. "Anyway, let's come back here early on Saturday with some mops and brooms. This place sure could use a good scrubbing."

"Good idea. It'll be clean when the gang helps us move on Sunday. Boy, is Charlie going to dig my studio."

"And Marsha will love the library. Honey, I don't think I've ever been so happy in my life!"

"Me too. But we'd better split now. It's getting dark and I'm not sure of the roads yet."

The two newlyweds left the house reluctantly, got into the car, and sped off. Sue turned to get one more look at the house before it disappeared from view behind a

bend in the road.

She sighed contentedly and snuggled close to her husband.

**RICK DROPPED** his paintbrush and ran to the head of the stairs. "My God, Sue—are you all right?" Not pausing for an answer, he raced headlong down the two flights of stairs to find his young wife standing in the hall.

"What happened, honey?"

"I'm sorry, Rick. I feel like an absolute ass. I was washing dishes in the kitchen when I thought I saw something out of the corner of my eye—something big and black and indistinct. So I screamed like a banshee. You didn't know you married a big chicken, did you?"

"It's all right, honey. I enjoy running down stairs. I like rinking my neck for you, dearest love bun."

"Don't be mad at me, Rick. I feel bad enough already."

"I'm only kidding. But seriously, honey, that's the second time you've been frightened. What's up?"

"Nothing at all. I guess I just have to get used to this house is all. Now go up and finish that painting. Your show is next month and I want the critics to be super-impressed. Go on, Scoot!"

She playfully chased him out of the hall, then went back to the dishes. Sighing softly to herself, she went to the closet next to the brand new gas stove they had installed, and got out a dustpan and broom to sweep up the pieces of a plate she had dropped in her fright.

Rick worked steadily on his painting. Then all of a sudden he stopped, frowned and cocked his head to one side. Shrugging, he resumed work, then stopped again. He whirled around to face—nothing. His brow lowered. Rick put down his brush, wiped his hands on a paint-soaked rag, and walked over to the opened door. He looked behind it, then opened the closet door. Nothing out of the ordinary. He went into the hall and inspected the store room. Everything was in order.

"Then why do I think somebody is with me?" he asked himself, walking back into the studio. "Maybe I should call it quits for the day." He cleaned his brushes, recapped the tubes of paint, and went downstairs.

Sue was in the second-floor room that they had decided to devote entirely to her hobby. An enormous loom covered nearly all of one wall, and pans of dye for wool accounted for much of the extra space.

"Um, nice." Rick drifted over and kissed the back of his wife's neck.

"Me or the work?" she teased.

"The work, naturally. You stink. Hey, that's all right." He stepped back to inspect the rug Sue was weaving. It was a beautiful, intricate job of graceful curves and quaint, old-fashioned flowers on a field of light blue.

"Something funny happened upstairs, Sue. I was positive somebody was in the studio with me. It wasn't you, was it?"

"Nope, I've been down here dyeing yarn for the next row of loops. It was probably the Muse of Art or something."

"Probably Something, at the rate my picture's going. Anyway, how about a little grub around here? This dude's starving to death!"

**A WEEK PASSED.** Life was quiet but fruitful for the two artists. Rick finished one painting and began another, and Sue's rug was becoming more and more lovely each day. But not every moment was devoted completely to art. The house was starting to have that warm, lived-in appearance. And the grounds, although small and cut on three sides by a thick growth of hedge, had definitely improved. Sue had even started a small flower garden.

She was outside planting bulbs when the tree fell. The mass of it landed right on top of her, pinning her body close to the soil. Thankfully Rick had seen everything from the third-floor window in his studio. He had tried to yell to her, but she couldn't hear his warning.

He ran down, and using the jack from the car, managed to haul away the heavy trunk. Outside of a few bruises and a sore back. Sue was unhurt.

Rick apologized over and over again. "It's all my fault, honey. I should have chopped down that dead tree a week ago."

"No damage done, Rick. But it is a bit strange that it should fall just when I was under it."

"I'd call it weird. When I saw it start to totter. I pounded on the glass. But you couldn't hear me. Then I tried to open the window, but it was stuck. I couldn't budge it."

"Rick, I opened that window only yesterday. You were working on the car and I went up to air out your studio—all that turpentine must give you a headache. I remember thinking that it was the only

(Continued on page 48)

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Supposedly a medieval hoax, the "Devil" lay quietly in a glass case—waiting for the discovery of a special key.

# THE DEATH DANCE OF THE FISHERMAN'S

An ugly, twisted little thing—and  
yet its contorted power was great!



The Great Sambi focused his glowing eyes in the distance, said a chant, and began climbing the Knife-Ladder of Agony. But in his trance he felt nothing.

# DEVIL

■ "It's ghastly—the most disgusting thing I've ever seen in my whole life!" Nancy felt the bile rise in her mouth, yet she was compelled to stare at the thing lying so peacefully in its glass case. "But you still haven't answered my question," she tore her glance away just long enough to look at Roger. "What is it?"

"Steady there, girl. You look like you're going to pass out. Or be sick all over the floor—or something equally inconvenient. Let's split and I promise I'll tell you about it later when your stomach is a bit more steady."

Nancy agreed. They left the darkened, small office where Roger worked as a sort of assistant to the famous medievalist, Dr. Guzman Alfarache, and paused for a moment on the broad stairs that faced the road. The college grounds ended just by the gate that separated the institution from the rest of the world. A car's headlights gleamed for a moment, then disappeared behind the curve of highway that was just beginning to be lost in the gathering twilight.

Roger put his hand in Nancy's and together the pair walked down the stone steps. They had a standing agreement. Roger would work on Friday and Saturday nights until eight o'clock; then Nancy would meet him and they'd go off on a date.

But tonight's meeting was going to be very different. Instead of the usual movie followed by a hamburger and a coke, Roger and Nancy had tickets to see the Great Sambi and his "Hoard of Howling Horrors," as Roger called it. Actually, the man was a magician who specialized in feats of the supernatural. Not content with pulling rabbits out of hats and untwirling miles of knotted, silk handkerchieves, the Arab gave demonstrations of levitation, mass hypnotism and

by JOSEPH GLANYIL

mind control.

Roger wasn't impressed.

"Honestly, Nancy," he said as he got into the car and leaned over to open the passenger door, "I don't understand your fascination for weird things. You're just like the little kid who teases the big black dog next door, then runs like hell when it growls at you."

Nancy turned to her boyfriend. She said sweetly, "Do you mean about Sambi? I told you months ago

I wanted to see him—but only from the back door. And besides, those were the only tickets we could afford."

"As long as you brought it up, OK. He calls himself a fakir. I call him a faker. But I really don't mean him so much. It's the thing back at the office. You bugged me for a week to give you a peek at it, then you take one quick little look and decide to barf on the floor. I had to go through a lot of hassling to get

you inside that office."

"So next time, disguise me as the cleaning lady. Anyway, since you gave me a key to the office, you knew perfectly well I'd go there alone to look at it. But hold on, pet. If I remember correctly, you got pretty green around the gills when you first saw it too."

"Well, that was different. I was. . ."

"Sure, sure. Anyway," Nancy cuddled up to Roger as the car



Raising his shoulders, he recited the formula that would cause his mesmerized assistant to defy all natural law.

started up and began heading toward town, "you promised to tell me the history of that thing."

"Fine with me. But are you sure you won't get sick?" Nancy playfully hit him with her pocketbook. Laughing, Roger leaned over to turn down the radio.

"That cute little bugger was created by a medieval alchemist. According to tradition, it was made by the great Nostradamus himself. But Dr. Alfarahe and I have every reason to suspect that it is actually much older than the sixteenth century and came from Persia, not France. But whatever, its function was to back up the theory of the existence of sea monsters. It is called the "Dance of the Fisherman's Devil" for some reason or other, and is made of a fish tail, a monkey's head and chest, and wild birds' claws, all very cleverly sewn together."

"But what did they use it for?" Nancy leaned forward slightly to light a cigarette.

"That we're not too sure about. Maybe as some sort of charm, or just as possible a bit of tangible evidence to support somebody's screwed-up ideas about monsters. Oops, I was so busy showing off, we just missed our exit."

Roger glanced out the window to see that nobody was behind him, and backed the car toward the exit. Skillfully he turned the wheel and completed the turn.

"Where is this theatre anyway? I don't think I've ever been there."

"On Elm, right next to the parking lot. There it is, just where that truck turned."

They followed the van and by some happy accident found a parking space. Getting out of the car, they paused for a moment to watch the men unload the contents of the big truck.

"What's all that junk?" Nancy called over to one of the workers.

"Some stuff for the Great Sambi's act, lady. And it sure weighs a ton!" the man cheerfully called back.

"Come on, Nance. The show starts in fifteen minutes."

The pair walked around to the front of the building and joined the end of a long queue of people waiting to get inside the theatre. But before Nancy and Roger had moved two feet closer to the entrance, they heard the sounds of a loud argument. They turned to see the pleasant workman who had spoken to them only moments before, busily engaged in trying to calm down an irate, dark little man.

"You fool, you stupid fool! How dare you not take special care with the infinitely precious equipment. I will have you discharged, accursed offspring of the dog!"

"I wonder who that dude is," murmured Roger.

"He's the world famous Sambi himself," whispered Nancy. "I saw his picture in the papers."

"Not too impressive, is he?"

"I don't know—I think he's kind of cute."

"Come on, the line's moved up." Roger took Nancy's arm and they moved up to the end of the line.

Once inside the theatre, they found their seats in the last row.

"My head's nearly touching the ceiling," commented Roger ruefully.

"Hush, the show's starting."

They sat back as the house lights dimmed and the curtain went up to reveal a stark stage relieved only by an enormous painted god in the center. It glowed eerily in the half-light. Green stage lights went on, animating the large cardboard figure so that it seemed to grin at the audience. Nancy shuddered and hung on to Roger's arm.

The Great Sambi stalked onto the stage, holding up his arms to stop the slight applause that trickled from the seats. The house was in utter silence. Sambi suddenly slapped his hands sharply. The noise seemed to be oddly frightening.

An assistant joined the man on the stage, also dressed in a weird costume of satin and velvet.

"You are privileged to see some of the strangest sights ever witnessed outside the Orient," Sambi intoned to the audience. "There will be absolutely no noise during my performance." His eyes glowed. He and the assistant bowed their heads as if gathering great strength from the gods for a terrible ordeal. The act began.

Sambi gathered a large chain of linked bracelets into his arms and waved them over his head. Suddenly the links would come loose and form unusual patterns. Only the jangling of the metal broke the silence.

"I've seen better stuff on Ed Sullivan," said Roger in what he thought was a whisper. Obviously it wasn't because several people in the audience began to laugh.

Sambi focused his burning eyes directly at Roger. He tossed the rings across the stage. They skidded in all directions. He stomped into the wings and returned with a sawhorse. He barked a command in

a weird-sounding language to his assistant who also lumbered off stage and came back with another trestle. These were placed about five feet apart. Sambi bowed to the pasteboard god, then placing his right palm on his assistant's forehead, he began crooning a tuneless melody through clenched teeth. The assistant started to waver to and fro. Amidst startled gasps from the audience, the man slowly stretched himself across the sawhorses, supporting his heavy weight solely on the back of his neck and his ankles. This was incredible, but more was to come.

With another chant, Sambi went behind the stiffened man, and faced the audience. He hunched both shoulders high over his head and slowly brought them down. The assistant began to quiver—and rise! The bigger Sambi held his hands, the more the entranced man rose until he was level with Sambi's throat. The magician whispered something no one in the audience could hear, then brought his assistant down to the trestles and out of his trance.

Other tricks followed—Sambi's walking on sharp sabres, a ring of fire suddenly appearing and disappearing around his left arm, the traditional birds and scarves pulled out of nowhere—but no one was really concentrating. Their minds were still firmly involved with the demonstration of levitation.

"I want a volunteer from the audience. You there—come forward!"

With a sinking heart, Nancy realized she was his choice.

"Go on, be a sport," Roger nudged her.

"That's easy for you to say, sweetums," she remarked dryly. But shrugging her shoulders, she went down to the stage. It might be fun, she reasoned.

Up close, Sambi wasn't quite the romantic figure he cut on the stage. He was a lot older than he appeared from a distance. And his costume was rather dirty and smelt of garlic. His fingernails were chipped and grimy. But his eyes—dark, glowing coals—were every bit as commanding.

He ordered his servant to bring a chair from the wings. Nancy sat down and Sambi began a new segment of his act.

Taking a silver medallion from inside his tunic, he started swinging it on its chain in wide arcs and bade

(Continued on page 50)

# SHE TRIED TO SELL MY SOUL TO SATAN

Witchcraft? At first  
I laughed at it. But  
I'm not laughing so  
hard anymore!

Strong arms held Joan as she was  
led slowly to the sacred altar.



A wild, drunken festival followed the "Mass." Singing and shouting curses, the Participants hurled themselves into huge vats of a strange, evil-smelling potion whose stinky stench made me want to be sick on the floor.

by GEORGE VENNER

**T**AKE A CLOSE LOOK at the cute blonde waiting near you at the bus stop. Yep. She's neatly dressed in the latest fashion and her pert face is a picture of innocence.

*Yet, she may be a full-fledged, witch!*

See that attractive matron in her early 30's—the one who lives right down the street from you? Sure. She's quiet, well-mannered. At least, on the outside.

*Behind that calm, placid facade of respectability, she could very well be hiding the vile, orgiastic nature of a woman devoted to worship of the Devil and the forces of Evil!*

Don't laugh. Don't dismiss the possibilities from your mind. It doesn't matter much where you live—in the largest of eastern seaboard "Big Towns" or quiet, midwestern communities.

The shocking facts are that witchcraft, Devil Worship and the "practice" of Black Magic are commonplace in the United States today! All across the country, thrill-seeking men and women are turning to the "Dark Arts" to satisfy their thirst for weird and bizarre orgies.

In Los Angeles, California, three "Devil Cults" sprang up to take the place of the infamous "Purple Cult" which was

(Continued on next page)

dissolved after the murder of a member, sultry Anya Sosyeva. The "Purple Cult" and its successors were—and are—made up of fanatics who practice the loathesome Black Mass.

Not long ago, Chicago police raided a West Side cult's headquarters. More than a dozen couples were taken into custody. Officers declared that they had all been participants in wild sex orgies held after three-hour-long sessions of Black Magic and sorcery!

California's Psychoanalytical Assistance Foundation, which has been making a study of the sudden resurgence of witchcraft, demon worship and black magic, estimates that there are at least 1,500 groups devoted to these practices in the United States!

Most of them are in smaller cities and towns, made up of people bored by "old-fashioned" wife-swapping orgies or wild parties.

I know. I can attest to the existence of one such cult in my own small town located less than 100 miles from Omaha, Nebraska! I learned at firsthand about the modern witches and black magicians. I also learned about the network of such organizations across the nation—because I, myself, unwittingly became a member!

How? Remember the cute blonde I suggested you eye carefully at the bus stop?

Well, the girl who initiated me into the revolting practices of the "Dark Arts" wasn't blonde and I didn't meet her at a bus stop. But she was a normal, everyday sort of person.

Joan was her name and she was a brunette. I'd gone to high school with her. I hadn't seen her for some years. First, I'd done a three-year hitch in the Air Force. Then I'd worked around here and there—in Kansas City, St. Louis and a few other places—for another four years.

I'd been back home for more than eight months before I bumped into Joan. I met her in a drugstore when I went in to buy a pack of cigarettes. She was purchasing some cosmetics and I didn't recognize her.

"Why, George!" she exclaimed. "George Venner!"

I thought hard. Then I remembered who the good-looking brunette was. I shook hands with her and took a quick, sneak-look at her left hand. She was still single—not even engaged. I became a lot more interested. Attractive, single women aren't too easily found in a burg that has less than 20,000 population.

One thing led to another and we wound up going to the best—and almost only decent—bar in town for a couple of drinks. Joan sipped hers and chatted pleasantly. I ended by

driving her home and making a date for the following night.

**T**HE FIRST DATE was pretty tame. We went to a movie, then had a bite to eat. We were both home—she in hers, me in mine—before one a.m. But I did have another date with her for Saturday night.

We went into Omaha and did a lot of dancing and almost as much drinking. I parked along the highway on the way back. Joan melted like she'd been worked over with a blow-torch the moment I reached over and put my arms around her!

This time, we didn't get home until after dawn. I was worried for Joan, worried about what the neighbors might think when she got out of my car that time of the morning. I told her as much. Her answer shook me a little.

"Don't worry, honey," she grinned. "I don't care what those slobbs think! There are things I know about them that would make your hair curl . . ."

Joan lived with her married sister and brother-in-law. They were friendly as hell whenever I called for her in the weeks that followed. I knew they must have guessed what was going on, but they didn't say a thing.

Then, on a warm Spring night Joan asked me if I would like to go away for a weekend to a place where a lot of her friends went.

"It's only about 15 miles outside town—up in the hills," she murmured. "We can have a ball . . ."

Of course we went. The "place" was an old rambling farmhouse in the hills. It looked like any such building in the area—from the outside. There already were five or six cars parked outside when we arrived.

"Sure this is okay—you and me showing up with our suitcases?" I asked. Joan just laughed.

Inside, the house was weird. There were odd paintings and idols scattered around in the rooms. All the windows had heavy black drapes. The air smelled strongly of some queer kind of incense.

I was even more surprised by the people I met. I knew many of them—quite a few being what are called "Pillars of the Community."

**B**Y THE TIME somebody stuck a drink in my hand, showed me the room which, my guide said pointedly, Joan and I would share, and came back downstairs, I had the deal figured. I knew that this was some kind of hell-raising club, but, of course, I never dreamed what I would see and hear before the weekend was over!

There was plenty of hooch and everyone—myself included—drank

plenty that Saturday afternoon. We ate a sketchy meal about five and went back to drinking. A lot more people had shown up in the meantime.

"Here—try one of these," Joan purred shortly after dark, handing me a cigaret. I took one look at it—sniffed it—and knew what it was. I'd seen marijuana before.

I lit up, anyway, figuring that one wouldn't hurt me. Besides, everyone else was smoking the damned things and the party looked as though it was going to get very rough very soon.

It did.

Exactly at nine p.m., we were all ushered into a large room that I hadn't seen before.

"Baby! You'll go wild now! This is going to be sensational!" Joan whispered to me hotly. I took a look at her flaring nostrils and narrowed eyes, felt her quick, shallow breathing as she clung to me. I felt myself caught up by the spirit of the binge and went inside!

The room was a hideous caricature of what one would find in a small church. There were benches to serve as pews and a kind of altar at the far end. The light was dim and I didn't get a chance to identify anything for a few moments. When my eyes became accustomed to the dark, I almost slipped.

An honest-to-goodness coffin, standing on end, was in each corner of the room. The walls were decorated with blasphemous parodies of sacred pictures. A brazier glowed near the "altar."

"What—what's this all about?" I stammered.

"You're going to see a Black Mass!" Joan rasped. "Here, sit down . . ."

**W**HAT IS A BLACK MASS? Well, basically it is a form of religious worship. Don't be surprised at the use of the word "religious" in connection with such a practice.

For it is religion in every sense of the word. It has a creed, a theology, a ritual, a ministry and full belief in both the immortality of the soul with both reward and punishment in this life and the hereafter.

It is made up, here in America, of a combination of two forms of witchcraft. And though, for the most part, the ceremonial of the Black Mass is based on the ordinary Christian worship, it has also incorporated over the centuries the beliefs, superstitions and practices of dozens of other portions of the world.

One of the two mainstreams of American witchcraft traces directly back to the great, European tradition. This form, together with its superstitions, signs and rituals are known to millions of us who have

had parents or grandparents from the teeming European continent.

The European witchcraft derives from a life of hardship. In the cool, temperate climate, the need for survival and safety were all-important. Starving serfs, semi-slaves, living an ignorant, agricultural life, inheriting the primitive; pre-Christian beliefs, needed something that could guarantee them a better life.

A good crop, a safe journey through robber-infested forests, freedom for themselves and their children, personal wealth that could purchase comfort or provide a dowry for daughter and an estate for a son were essential needs.

In a feudal society, these could not be gained directly. It took only a short time to discover that regular prayer in the established church could not rectify the hazards of life, either.

Thus the need for gain predominated. At first, prayers to the "old gods," the names we come across in Roman mythology were tried. But as Christianity prevailed and grew stronger, the allegiance was transferred to the Devil. The theory was, if God can't help me, perhaps the Devil will. And obviously, since the Devil was the opposite of God, his worship too, must be exactly opposite. Thus to defile God's worship was to promote the Devil's.

Again, since the ancient magic beliefs of the Indo-European society were filled with what is known as "sympathetic magic"—that is performing a similar act to the effect you wish to cause, sex played a large role. The need for gain, for life, for fertility of wife, cattle or crop, required a symbolically sexual act. And so, combining sexual, fertility rites with defilement of church worship, sexual defilement became a primary ritual form.

The defilement included bestiality. Pan—symbolized by his goat, Odin by his great wolf, and other, lesser known deities, also symbolized by animals, entered the Black Mass at an early day. Even now, the fear of the great dog, the black cat, and the goat—all as symbols of the Devil, survive in witchcraft.

The second mainstream of American witchcraft comes from the import of African medicine-man magic. Primarily typified by Voodoo, this is a jungle worship that arises from an opposite motivation. Living is not so difficult in the lush jungles of the rain forest or Caribbean. Here, food is readily available. Crops may not be heavy, but they are constant. Rainfall is sure, and game abounds in the forest lands. There is little essential need to invoke magic or fertility rites to gain them.

But survival is another problem.

Death lurks around the next bend in the jungle trail at all times. Tribal warfare is constant. Fighting, battling and confounding an enemy are the necessities of daily living.

Thus, the African witchcraft, deals in revenge. It is a method for saving your life, and killing your enemy. It deals in death, in negation, in destruction.

**D**EALING IN DEATH, it requires death to give it effect. The kill, done in the ritual, is vital. Blood is required. The cock, the cat, or the human who is coldly murdered as part of the ceremonial, symbolizes this belief in death. The drinking of the blood of the victim, symbolizes the superiority and triumph of the drinker over all his foes and competitors.

But African witchcraft has no belief in the soul. It denies the possibility of the afterlife. Death is final and absolute. An enemy killed by witchcraft can never haunt the killer. No ghost or spirit remains on the trail to trip or trap the unwary. It is safe, and efficient.

That these two opposites should blend so completely here in America is not at all surprising. First of all, economically, we are more akin to the African than the European. In comparison with the rest of the world, we live in a rich country. Surplus, more than famine is the order of the day. We don't have to struggle for food. But we do face a struggle for power and wealth. We do face the competitions of business. We do struggle for promotions, for pay-raises—even for women. Gaining a dowry for a daughter is not essential. Getting a good job for a son, is.

But inheriting a witchcraft tradition from Europe has left its mark. Those brought up in that tradition are horribly afraid to abandon it. And so, needing the results offered by the African magic, the Black Mass has incorporated its essentials. So too, the African, transplanted to a western civilization has come to desire the efficacy of the white man's magic. Accepting Christianity, they have accepted devil worship also. And since a regular ritual already existed, they have layered it over with their own jungle tradition.

Thus, today, we have this new form of witchcraft with its two points of effect: revenge and gain. The Black Mass can now offer almost anything to the believer. He can become wealthy. He can live longer. He can gain power and fame. He can foil his competitors. He can kill his enemies.

For the objects of the leaders—and consequently the objects of the congregation, are self-glory and damnation of all who stand in their way.

**A**ND STRANGELY ENOUGH, these things actually happen. Call it accident, coincidence or what you will, but in a surprisingly large number of cases, far larger than the normal logic of odds would dictate, the objectives of their witchcraft is achieved.

For example, a witchcraft group in a Massachusetts town was uncovered a few years back. The members were reviled, hounded and in the case of the leaders, jailed. Six months later, the two mills on which the town depended for economic survival closed. Better than 90% of the town's inhabitants were impoverished. Yet, not a single member of the witchcraft group suffered. Those employed by the mills were conveniently transferred to jobs down South. Another, a leader of the movement, even while in jail made nearly a million dollars when a worthless Canadian mining company struck Uranium. Every one of them in fact profited to some extent from the rest of the people's disaster.

Or take the reporter who uncovered a group in California. Six months later, he came down with leprosy. By the time it was uncovered, his wife and two children were also infected. Yet those were the only cases of the disease which had been seen in that town either before or since.

Two youngsters in Louisiana spied on a series of Black Masses for weeks before being discovered. The witches smiled at them, but never touched them. Nevertheless, they told their friends about what they had seen. The story flew all over the parish. Four weeks later, one of the boys went crazy, stabbing the second boy to death, without warning or provocation. The young killer is now committed to the state insane asylum for life.

The horrifying thing about it all is that in no case is there anything for a victim or an investigator to put his finger on. It's all so natural. The jailed Massachusetts devil-priest just happened to own the mining stock. He's held it for years. The mills were losing money. The decision to close them and move operations south was as natural as could be. The California reporter caught a regular disease. According to doctors he must have caught it somewhere, but certainly none of the witches could have infected him. The Louisiana boy went crazy. There was insanity in his family history. It was as natural as could be.

But still, why did it happen to just those people at exactly that time? Why did all the devil-worshippers prosper in spite of ridicule; and all their detractors suffer or die? Why? (Continued on page 54)



# THE SHRIEKING CURSE OF THE VOODOO GOD

Science, logic—these are the tools to combat superstition.

And so he took them up to rid the world of the Evil Presence!

by NICHOLAS FLAMEL

“**NONSENSE!**” the man behind the desk banged his fist in anger. “As acting mayor of this town, I have the power to utterly destroy this foolishness. And I have every intention of doing so!”

“Monsieur, you are new here. You do not know the ways of our people. Their magic is strong and no, I do not think you have the power.”

The official looked quizzically at his secretary. “Tell me something, Claude—are you a believer in this superstitious stupidity?”

The older man smiled sadly. “Ah, no. I am a regular communicant in our Holy Mother Church. But that is not to say that my eyes are blind to that which I cannot see. The papaloi, the priests of the Old Faith, cast strong spells. I do not believe in them, but I do believe all I hear about them. They exist and are something to fear. Do not anger them.”

“We shall see about that, Claude. Meanwhile, there



is much work to be done and so little time. All my life I have wanted to help our people. And now I have the ability to do so."

"But you do not know us. You were educated first in Europe and then in the United States from the time you were a small child. You came back only for holiday. You know hardly anything of the customs of our country. And..."

"But don't you see, Claude—that's exactly how I plan to make changes. I don't know the customs, it

But time grows short and we must begin the financial report."

Conversation ceased as the two men started the new project. Pierre Duprez's predecessor had left matters in a terrible state and it took most of a working day just to clear up the backlog, let alone begin new plans for improving the village.

Half Haitian, half French, the well-educated Pierre had been a logical choice for acting mayor when that office had been made vacant by the unex-



Life seems quiet in the village now. But do not be fooled. Each of these people is a powerful subject of Obi.

is true. But I also am not bogged down with superstition and fear. The past does not make me its slave. It is history, nothing more. Education, pride and progress—that is what we need. Not any of these fear cults. They hold the people back, so they must be stopped. And that is all there is to it."

"Your words make sense, but put into practice, I fear they are meaningless. However, that is not for me to decide. I am your secretary, not your teacher. Do what you will."

"I intend to. But you realize I depend upon your wisdom and experience now more than ever, Claude. I am thankful they assigned you to be my assistant.

pected death or suicide of the previous mayor. The authorities had been worried over the apparent shifting backwards of the village population to superstition, idolatry and black magic. Still a semi-civilized people, the citizens of the out-lying towns and villages needed only a small reminder of their ancient past to undo the efforts of over two hundred years of attempted colonization. The government wanted a man firmly on their side, and yet who had some sort of feeling for Haitian culture.

Pierre was such a man. He had seen personally other countries less prosperous than Haiti take their places as productive,

(Continued on page 58)



# TELL US ABOUT IT

(Where space allows, from time to time, we like to present a letter written by one of you readers that perhaps might be too long for the regular Notes From Our Readers column or that is so interesting and unique that we would want to highlight it. This is such a letter. We feel that it is both our duty and our obligation to free the supernatural from altogether too many silly misconceptions. Once the air is cleared from the clouds of confusion all of us will be able to judge for ourselves whether or not forces beyond human control and understanding really are at work in our world. Our thanks to Mr. Elgar for taking time to write us this remarkable letter. And again, please feel free to let us know your opinions. Remember that this column belongs completely to you. You've got a right to say anything, everything you want regarding the supernatural. Let us hear from you today!

The ED.)

## DEAR SIR:

It was the strangest, weirdest experience I've ever had in my life. It was like nothing I've ever read or imagined it would be like. Sure, it was frightening, but it was also exciting and I never thought I could feel such raw, driving force. I'll never be the same again. I'm talking about spirits. No, not the white sheet on Halloween or Caspar the Friendly Ghost. This was real, nothing made up to make little children obey their parents. No Bogey man, no Hollywood crea-

tion. Until my dying day I'll never forget it.

There's an abandoned church in our neighborhood. It was built in 1859. A bad fire in 1901 completely gutted out the interior. It was reopened in 1905 for service, but finally closed down for good in 1927. A new church was constructed about a quarter of a mile down the road. Why was a perfectly good church shut down? No one was quite sure. But one thing was certain—when you were in the church, even during the brightest part of the day, you were uncomfortable. You would start at the slightest sound and would almost expect to see something creep up from the corner of your eye. That was the worst part of it—the almost. If something would happen, you'd be scared, but at least it would be a concrete fear, a terror you could control.

You see, when the church burned down in 1901 there was a choir practice going on. Six young girls ranging in age from 16 to 19 were burned beyond recognition, as was the aged sexton. People claim to have heard female voices raised in unearthly harmony coming from the church late at night—and many of these people were strangers to our town and had no idea of the building's history.

I scoffed at the idea of ghosts. I admit I was nervous in the church, but I thought it was just my imagination. It became a tradition to hold fraternity initiations in the church and to make the pledges stay all night there.

There was a lot of howling and spooking, by the members, but nothing was ever seen.

A friend got me slightly interested in ghosts. He explained that these spirits were merely left-over life forces. The human brain emits a tiny electrical charge—this is a well-proven scientific fact. When a person dies violently or suffers intense passion for a long period, excess electricity is released into the surrounding air. This is a "ghost". My friend made me understand it better by telling me this analogy: when you have your picture taken by a flash-bulb camera, you can still see the flash even though it is no longer there. It's sort of an after-image. Ghosts are precisely this after-image of life.

He also went on to say that this electrical charge becomes solidified only when atmospheric conditions are correct. In other words, specific days of the year are absolutely no indication of when a ghost may be sighted. So you're wasting your time looking for one on Halloween unless conditions are right for it. And you can feel it. The air is heavy; there is a stiff wind; no stars; you can sense the tension long before it is time for the appearance. The early morning hours between three-thirty and five o'clock A.M. are the prime time for a sighting.

I was still skeptical, but when my friend called me at midnight one night and said the ghosts would appear, I went with him to the church. We got there at about two-thirty and climbed in from the basement window. We couldn't use any light—that would upset the delicate balance required for the re-union of the electric charges.

We sat on the floor near where the altar used to be and with our faces toward the choir loft. At first there was nothing at all. I was getting tired and bored. It was in late autumn and I was chilly.

Then I began to feel it. Intense cold—not chilly, but cold, dead, damp and unbelievably heavy. My friend turned to me and silently nodded. We raised our eyes to loft. There in the darkness a faint light glimmered, grew brighter, and gradually separated into six very indistinct shapes. They were faintly oval.

I almost fainted from fear but I pinched my leg and concentrated on the pain to bring me out of it. The shapes were brighter now and a little clearer. They stood in a row near the ledge, but were definitely two feet above the flooring in the loft. They began to thrash about, run in wild gyrations. Not a sound, but the tension in the air was unbearable. A seventh globe of light ran towards them from a corner of the loft—then all merged into one huge glowing mass that seemed to be breathing in agony. Suddenly the great light was extinguished.

The cold disappeared and the tension left the night. The two of us sat on the floor for an hour scarcely daring to breathe. Finally we left the church. We were both covered with sweat and our legs were unsteady. I went to his house and he made a pot of very strong coffee. We finished it in five minutes.

That was my experience. I found out later that the original choir loft was about two feet higher than the present one and that is why the apparitions were not touching the flooring—they were still based on the old level.

But these seven victims feel no pain and are in no way conscious of re-enacting their tragic deaths. They are merely beams of electrical light. You can't communicate with them just as you can't rid yourself of them until the electricity is gradually absorbed into the atmosphere.

I'm a firm believer now. The unearthly harmonies are just imagination at work, but the indistinct globes of light are physi-



Mr. Crawford had just finished playing this organ when he received his psychic union with spirit world; can communicate with the ghost only through music.



cally there. I've seen them and have experienced unvarnished terror in the face of the Unknown. I don't know what to

make of them. And I don't mind telling you that I'm scared.

Frank Elgar  
THE END

# ADVENTURES IN

# WITCHCRAFT



by WHITTIER FOWLES, Ph.D., Sc.D.

WE ARE all very familiar with vampires—thanks to Bela Lugosi and the nineteen-thirties. Count Dracula and his host of celluloid “creatures of the night” have delighted and more or less terrified us for years.

These movies are a lot of fun and of course I'd be the last person in the world to condemn them for not being “scholarly”—because they are made to be enjoyed and not to be taken seriously by students of the Occult. But unfortunately these Hollywood monster movies are often the closest most people get to a detailed study of the vampire phenomenon. A real vampire is no more afraid of a crucifix than you or I would be. And you can imagine that this could cause serious problems. Since the general public knows so little about this weird and frightening creature, I have decided to devote an entire column to the study, detection and possible destruction of the Vampire!

As far as etymology goes, the word “vampire” comes from the Russian “Vampir” and the South Russian “Upuir.” The root word is “Pi” and means “to drink.” Technically, a vampire is the body of a dead person who returns in spirit from the grave for the express purpose of destroying and sucking the blood from a living person. Psychologically and also philosophically, vampirism may be the spiritual form that accounts for the specific facts of a wasting disease where the afflicted party gradually pines away until he dies. The ability of a vampire to sink through the ground to its grave can be explained by the precipitation of matter.

Vampires are the special nemesis of the Slavonic peoples, especially in the Baltic countries and in Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia where these creatures suck blood. But there is an interesting confusion—because in White Russia, the Ukraine, Ancient Mexico (Mayan and Toltec civilizations) and the West Indies, vampires are sorcerers and wizards, alive but with strange, occult powers. And to add to the confusion, in Greece, vampires are called “Broncolais” or “Bourkakakos”—coming from the Slavonic word for werewolves!

There is an ancient but sure-fire way to spot the grave of a suspected vampire. A young, virgin boy is placed on the back of a coal-black stallion that has never serviced a mare. The virgin pair is led across to the graveyard and allowed to roam. Where the horse refuses to step, even after repeated beatings, is sure to be the grave of the vampire.

One of the most important things to keep in mind is that vampirism is always epidemic—there will be a whole mass of deaths, not just one or two. In 1730-35 there was a well-documented epidemic of it in many countries.



And now for a detailed description of the suspected vampire's corpse. Look first at the grave. There will be several holes about the diameter of a man's finger in the earth above the casket. When the dirt is shoveled away and the coffin opened, the corpse will have wide-open eyes and a ruddy, life-like complexion with absolutely no sign of corruption or decay. A closer look will bring forth the fact that the hair, beard and fingernails will have grown as long in the grave—as in actual life—and there will be two livid marks on the neck. The limbs will be flexible, the blood in the veins fluid, and the entire corpse will be of a swollen and gorged appearance. Quite often the casket will be filled with blood and the shroud half-devoured.

At least half of these general characteristics must be present before we can say definitely that the corpse in question returns to life once the sun has set. But after that accusation is

made and borne up by physical appearance, there are several ways we can help rid the world of yet another horror. Behead the body and take out the heart. Impale the corpse on a white-thorn stake (although in Russia an aspen stick is always used). And then burn it. When the stake is driven home, the corpse will utter a dreadful cry (however this is probably gas escaping from the intestine of the corpse). It is true that a wreath of garlic will drive a vampire away, but only by beheading and drawing the heart out will the menace be stopped permanently.

Ghosts can be studied quite accurately; werewolves can be analyzed, and in some cases even helped to become normal again; but very little is still known about vampires. Whether or not daylight can indeed destroy them is not certain (outside of stories, no one has ever cornered one—and lived to tell of it) nor is their ability to transform themselves into bats and other creatures a proven fact.

The last recorded epidemic of vampirism occurred in Hungary at about the turn of the century. Fortunately it could be stopped before

many people died—all told, about a dozen persons succumbed to the terror. Vampires have the uncanny ability to remain in the grave for years with no touch of human blood. Some say they can subsist on the life fluid of worms, maggots in the coffin, and that of rats and other rodents on the outside. The world has not seen the last of these creatures. They are waiting dormant—until the sign is given. What it is that causes them to rise en masse and strike terror in the hearts of innocent people, I have no idea. Perhaps increased radiation in the atmosphere will once again re-activate them. But whatever the cause, they will rise again.

I am a scholar—but I am also a student as well. Any of you who have had dealings with vampires, or who happen to know something about them that I have missed in this discourse, should write me in care of this magazine. In this case, knowledge is vital to our survival.

THE END

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# Letters

Dear Sir:

I've just finished reading your February issue of *Horror Stories* and I am extremely annoyed. I wish to protest your portrayal of witches. In the story, "The Devil Needs your soul," you mistakenly describe the witch as a hideously ugly creature capable of neither love nor goodness. I think this slander has gone on long enough.

No, I am not a witch myself, but my Aunt Martha is. And you couldn't meet a sweeter, nicer woman in the whole world. She bakes cookies for half the town's kids after school, is active in charity work, and the minute someone is sick, Aunt Martha is the first one over with a fresh brew of herb tea.

All of Aunt Martha's spells bring only good things to people. It wasn't a week ago that she stayed up all night reciting incantations to save the boy next door's dog that got hit by a car. And the month before that she made sure it wouldn't rain on the day of the church's annual picnic.

Aunt Martha is a dear, gentle old lady and we all love her. She's not only a delight to have around—she's also a credit to the community.

Aggie Blake  
(Sorry, but we never meant to malign the hundreds of honest and dedicated "white" witches both here and in Europe who try to make life more pleasant for the rest of us. We appreciate the generous efforts of these kindly ladies. However, the practitioners of "Black" magic are far more interesting to read about. And we try our humble best to make our magazine both informative and fascinating to the general reader. Again, our apologies to the many Aunt Marthas in the world. Keep the faith, ladies! The ED.)

Dear Sir:

Gotcha! In your story, "The Mad Monster Strikes Again," you called the creepie, "The Gowanus Monster." Now as every dedicated

New Yorker knows, Gowanus is in Brooklyn. What gives?

Mike Steinberg  
(Mike, you're perfectly correct. However, that section of Brooklyn was originally settled by the Dutch (and incidentally, the Gowanus Canal is the last survivor of an extensive system of canals built by our hardy forefathers from Holland over 300 years ago.) It's a short hop from that section of Brooklyn to Lower Manhattan and maybe our "creepie" decided to take a swim. Or maybe his parents settled Gowanus. Let's not quibble over details. The Associate ED.)

Dear Sir:

I am offering a reward to anyone who can give me the whereabouts of a woman called Glinka Schmartmeedle. She's about 50 years old, short, stout and has a tattoo of a heart on her left forearm. She's also a witch. Last summer she put a curse on my wife. Betty was in the supermarket and accidentally rolled her shopping cart over this woman's foot. Betty apologized, but to no avail. Glinka whispered a spell and ran out of the store. She hasn't been seen since. My wife can't stop limping. She's been to some of the finest specialists in the world but so far nothing has done any good. Please, if you know where or how Glinka can be reached, write me in care of this magazine. One more thing: "Glinka Schmartmeedle" may be an alias. But whatever her name, she's dangerous. I don't want anyone else to suffer what my wife's going through.

Harry Haller

(Continued on page 64)

The EDITORS OF HORROR STORIES are happy to print your comments and any replies that you, our readers, wish to send in to us. Address all mail to:

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## HOUSE OF VAMPIRES

(Continued from page 8)

ground and its contents spilled out. Rings, watches, necklaces, even gold teeth knocked from their unprotesting owners' grinning skulls, rolled into the tall grass near the cemetery.

The man cried out, his arms attempting to flail at the attacking bats. He screamed again as he felt sharp needles of fire enter his neck, his breast, his thigh. But the taste of warm blood made his tormentors more powerful, stronger. With a final wail of agony, the victim toppled over. No sounds now but the greedy lapping of a liquid.

The three flew up again, leaving the corpse lying by the road. They were warm and happy; they were content. Food—and now pleasure!

**S**WOOPING down, the three creatures of a moon in darkness resumed more recognizable forms. They landed near the entrance of a deserted mansion. All was in complete darkness, and the wild ivy, broken stones and decayed wood gave mute testimony that the ancient castle served as no one's home.

No one human, that is, for inside, all was different. Dark creatures cavorting, dancing, mocking life, whirled around to discordant music played by an unseen orchestra. Shrieks of instant laughter filled the swaying ballroom.

The host, a being dressed in a long, flowing cape and dark evening clothes, glided over to greet the newcomers.

"It is good you are here. Come, how do you like my centerpiece? He pointed, then laughed shrilly.

They stared, then joined in his cruel mirth. The corpse of a young girl lay on the table, her once-pretty features contorted in a grimace of death. The azure iris of her eyes stared sightless. Her body was decorated with leaves, grapes, apples and similar objects mocking a human celebration of a success full harvest—almost as if the creatures had dimly remembered another form of existence.

"Quite charming, I'm sure," the male's mate smiled. "And very healthy—for a mortal, of course. But who got the blood?"

"That's the surprise. Too bad you missed it when we tortured her, but you're not too late for the blood. Here. A cup was passed around.

Each took a sip of the delicious liquid. "You're the expert," the host said to the other male. "Tell us."

The leech took another swallow, carefully rolling the blood around on his tongue. "Ah—about twenty, would be my guess; comes from that small village near here—the one that nearly discovered all of our, ah, sleeping quarters. And," he giggled "she was a virgin."

"Elgar, after 120 years, you still never fail to amaze me. But enough of that. I have another. . ." His voice trailed off as he rapidly sniffed the air.

"It can't be, but I smell—GARLIC!"

Instantly the room panicked. Someone howled—the dozens of things dispersed in all corners of the room.

"Look!" A clove of garlic rolled slowly across the room. Vampires rushed to the other side of the room as more of the evil-smelling anathema joined the first.

Claw-like hands went up to throats as the stench of the noxious plant invaded the room.

Something smashed through the window. It landed with a crash of broken glass in the center of the chamber—a ladder. A human head peeked fearfully through the jagged rent in the curtain. Furious, the creatures snarled, but couldn't cross the pile of garlic buds that separated them from the puny mortal. The leeches hissed, howled as the first human man climbed into the room. He held high an enormous bunch of garlic buds. The stench was too much to bear and the creatures cowering against the wall began to vomit up clotted blood in great masses as the invading smell began to reach their nostrils.

"Hurry," the enemy said to the others as more of the human invaders climbed in, each equipped with the evil-smelling weed.

"It's almost dawn!" a voice wailed. The panic-stricken herd shoved forward in a great surge of despair.

"Hold!" the lead mortal cried, and threw his bunch of flowers at the mass of quaking vampires.

"Aagh!" the first rays of the sun struck. Howling agony echoed in the ballroom.

"Help me, I'm being. . ." The mouth that formed the words suddenly turned to dust. Moving jerkily, rotting corpses writhed on the floor as the slowly fanning rays



of a new day opened up and illuminated the sickening scene.

Beings that nothing could have killed, and for centuries had created havoc and hell on earth, lay in rapidly-decaying heaps like dead fish washed ashore. Making certain no creature was left with power, the head man slowly turned the nauseous mass with his walking stick, then calling his men, he exited through the window, after carefully taking the body of the murdered girl with them.

Soon flames of the burning mansion vied with the sun's light. Villagers crowded around the blazing edifice and raised a cheer when the roof finally caved in on the stinking corpses.

But one man refused to rejoice with the others, did not wish to join the celebration. His eyes bled with the reflection of the shooting flames.

"I swear by all things holy that I will not rest until every foul creature has been destroyed." His words, though barely above a whisper, were taut with conviction. "Nothing will bring my daughter back now, but at least I can be sure the world is free of such a hideous menace."

He stood by the blazing pyre, refusing to leave or to be comforted.

"Come home with us, John. We will help you."

"I cannot. I must wait until the ashes cool and see for myself that these things are destroyed."

**H**E WAITED the entire day, not moving, staring straight ahead at the smouldering ruin.

Night came, but it brought no peace to his heart. The wreckage still glowed a dull orange, mixed with the silver of the new moon to produce a strange shade of yellow. The old man shifted his weight from one foot to the other. He was exhausted.

Sighing, he turned to leave, to go back to an empty house. A few hundred yards down the road the first houses of the villagers gleamed cheerfully at him.

"Maria! You're..."

He got no further as fangs reached out and threw the broken old man down on the gravel. His feeble cries were drowned out by the fierce snarl of a starved vampire.

She looked up after her meal, daintily wiped her mouth on her fresh shroud, and continued the path her father had set to the village.

THE END

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## THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE

(Continued from page 11)

to speak, will help the memory. At any rate, tell me again all you know—both objective and subjective."

"Very well," Gibbons stirred his coffee. Putting down the spoon, he lit a cigarette, then leaning back in his chair, he began the story.

"About a hundred and some-odd years ago, a man called Charles Dawson bought this house. Nothing is known about him, his family, his past. But he was a cruel and driving man to his employees and even to his wife and child. Dawson took this Georgian townhouse and refurbished it in the height of Victorian taste—including the stairwell.

"No one knows why or how, but Dawson's daughter was found one day lying at the bottom of the circular stair. She had jumped—or was pushed—and obviously hadn't survived the fifty-foot fall. Dawson packed up his household and left almost immediately after.

"The house was sold several times in the last century. It seemed as if no one could bear living in it for any extended time."

"Because of the ghost?" I asked.

"The records don't say so, but I imagine that was the case. After all, what other reason could there be? The house is sturdy and well-built. And the heating system Dawson designed is a sound one and an excellent one. But a sinister reputation is hard to dispell. At any rate, after several owners in this century had bought and then given up the house, we acquired it some years ago."

"Did you notice anything out of the ordinary?"

"Not for quite a while. My wife and I have—or I should say, had—no patience with superstitious prattle. And when we did hear strange noises, we blamed them on rats and poor drainage."

"A common enough assumption—and in most cases, a correct one. Ghosts aren't as prevalent as some would have us believe."

"About a year ago, the noises, or whatever they were, began picking up in both frequency and pitch. Our children woke up crying from fear and we were rather unsettled ourselves."

"And it was then you decided to move?"

"Not quite—at least not until our oldest daughter awoke one night to

find a strange glowing figure bending over her. Vanessa still has nightmares about it."

"What was that?" I felt excitement well up in my throat. "You hadn't mentioned that before. You say an apparition appeared before your daughter?"

"Yes—but why is that so suddenly important?"

"Never mind. I can't tell you now, but it could be the very clew I needed. One question more and I'll be finished for the day. How is this house heated?"

"Very well, I'm glad to say—oh, you mean what fuel? Coal, I think. I'm sure of it. Why?"

"I'll be able to tell you later—if my premise is correct."

Together we left the house. I had some library work to research. Gibbons went to the rooms he had hired in London. We agreed to meet at the house in a few days. Meanwhile, I had much to do. I wasn't positive, of course, but I thought I might have had a real lead.

AT THE APPOINTED time later in that week, I met Gibbons at the townhouse and spent several hours in a painstaking search of the place from cellar to bleak, little garret. All was in order, but I was most interested in inspecting the old-fashioned furnace in the basement.

"Most fascinating," I called out to Gibbons who chose to remain outside the huge room-sized furnace. "I haven't seen one of this type in years—and in such good repair too."

"This is nonsense," he called back testily to me. "Are you a ghost hunter or a housing inspector? I wish you'd do your real estate appraisal on your own time. We want spooks, not drains."

I climbed out of the flux and spent several minutes sneezing and coughing.

"I would have made a terrible chimneysweep," I said, wiping caked-on soot from my face and glasses. "But it must be done. Of course it's always nice to inspect ghosts that walk down the grandstaircase in the dark of the moon; but in real life we're not always so aristocratic. I remember one ghost who had the annoying habit of haunting a septic tank. And if you don't think that was an unpleasant case, you're mad." I said this to tease Gibbons, of course. Ghosts are every bit as

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particular as human beings when it comes of cleanliness. "Anyway," I said brushing the last of the soot from my coveralls, "I think we are ready for the final test. I can't pinpoint the exact time for you but it will happen this week. By the way, I'll need a small spotlight. Perhaps there's a supermarket or petrol station opening somewhere and we could borrow theirs."

"I think you've gone insane, Varney. Off your nut."

I could see Gibbons was being perfectly serious. I suppressed a chuckle. Call it an old man's vanity, but I do so enjoy keeping my clients in the dark as much as possible—it usually makes for a more exciting climax. But I pretended my feelings were hurt and wouldn't speak to him until we parted for the night.

**W**E MET AGAIN at the old house, although this time under very different circumstances. Dusk and a steady drizzle had left the interior of the place unusually damp, dreary and uncomfortable. I had ordered that no electric lamp be lit. In cold and darkness we awaited the visitation.

With most occupations of an unusual sort, one gets used to the danger. A tight-rope walker feels no more fear in crossing the wire than he would crossing the street to buy the Sunday paper; a window washer hanging out of a fifty-storey window probably is bored. True, there is relatively little physical danger in my work, but the fear and terror it engenders remains with me always. If I live to be two hundred years old, I will never be used to the presense of ghosts. I am still frightened, just as I was the first time I came into contact with the citizens of Beyond—and that was half a century ago.

Tonight would be no different. Already I was beginning to feel the familiar butterflies in my stomach. My chest constricted and my breathes came in short gasps. I glanced at Gibbons. His face was chalk-white and in the one candle that I allowed to be lit against the darkness, I could see fine beads of perspiration on his brow.

"This is going to be a real adventure," I remarked, trying to cheer him. "You'll learn more tonight than you would if you read a whole encyclopaedia on the supernatural. You know, relatively few persons actually get to see spirits when you come right down to it, and you're a very lucky man

indeed." Then I went into the little speech I've recited countless times to each client—how ghosts can in no way harm us and that we will be perfectly safe at all times.

I had brought a picnic supper and we ate and played a few hands of gin by candlelight. We sat on the floor in the great hall, almost directly in that section of floor that had felt the impact of the girl's death so long ago. Time dragged slowly as it always does when waiting for a visitation, but eventually we both felt the unmistakable signs of spiritual activity.

"God, it's cold in here," complained Gibbons, pulling his coat tighter around him.

Conversation slackened as the internal pressure began to rise. I gestured to Gibbons for him to blow out the light. He did so, and we waited in total darkness for the next link in the chain of events.

A scream broke through the inky darkness! Gibbons and I automatically jumped. Another scream—followed by the sounds of naked feet running across the floorboards way above us.

"What will happen next?" I whispered to the ashen Gibbons. "Come on, man—tell me! I've got to know the exact time sequence."

"Another scream, count to five, more footsteps, then over the bannister," he answered in a dull but shaken voice.

We waited for the girl's cry. I poised myself on what had to be done. The shriek and the footfalls—I aimed and shone the spotlight on the unseen body falling towards us.

I don't know what caused it; the more I learn about the supernatural, the more I realise how much I don't know. The light exploded on the plummeting spirit. Gibbons and I were suddenly pitched headlong into a vortex, a whirlwind. Electricity crackled around us. We were thrown by the force of the blast—then silence as the spotlight steadily shone up to the empty chamber, the third from the left.

**T**HE NEXT MORNING I went to see him at his rooms. And over coffee, I filled in the details I had purposely left blank.

"Believe it or not, there is method to my madness, Mr. Gibbons. As it turned out my labours in your furnace payed off. I admit my chemistry was a little rusty, but after I checked a few texts, I found my original premise to be quite

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"Under ordinary circumstances, burning coal produces carbon dioxide. But when that same coal is ignited in an insignificant amount of oxygen, carbon monoxide is the final result. This is deadly in large quantities. There was a small leak in the pipe leading to that fourth-floor room—Miss Dawson's. Small amounts of carbon monoxide seeped in from the furnace—not enough to kill. But this carbon oxide also works on the brain. A person exposed to it over a period of time may become blind—or mad. I think this was the case with the rich man's daughter. She became mad—perhaps paranoiac, thinking that her life was in danger. In a final fit of insanity, she threw herself over the banister of the circular stair and was killed."

"But how do you know all this?" Gibbons interrupted.

"I don't," I told him frankly. "But using a little logic, I believe I can fill in the story. Let me go on. I knew something physical was wrong with the house when you told me of your own daughter's visitation by the ghost. Now spectres are very set in their ways—they're like a movie or a phonograph record. They go through set scenes and sounds. Your daughter saw the ghost in her own room. This is far from unusual. The ghost was trying to warn her of the danger—her room was directly under the fourth-floor chamber. The pipe leading to her sleeping quarters had begun to rust—I'm sure a closer inspection will bear me out."

"I still don't understand—why was the ghost helping us?"

"Why? Remember your Latin. The word for 'ghost' is 'anima.' But the word for 'soul' is also 'anima.' Two beings were at work in that house. The 'ghost' moaned and threw itself to a horrible death; the 'soul' tried to save human beings from a slow death. And they are one in the same."

"But we've destroyed it by introducing a concentrated beam of light through it. We've destroyed it by introducing a concentrated beam of light through it. We've upset the delicate balance of the molecules to produce a ghost. There is no more spectre—is there?"

"Actually, no. The violence of the explosion proved that—did you notice, by the way, that while we were hurled across the floor, not a window shade or curtain moved an inch? They were outside the tiny force field. Anyway, the ghost is no more. But the 'soul' of the house,

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the Guardian Angel if you will, is still there. We can't destroy that—and to be honest with you, I don't see why anyone should want to. The girl will be there always, unseen, unfelt, invisible, to guard the inhabitants of the mansion whatsoever."

"I suppose we can't contact her?"

"In no way. But, and this is purely personal opinion, I think you should tear down that stairwell and put another in its place. It may be a good way indeed to thank her!"

THE END

## THE LAUGHING WITCH

(Continued from page 16)

painting ripped from its stretcher, the contents of the parlor lay in jumbled confusion. And through it all, dancing in the crazy light, was the shadow on the wall.

Henry took a deep breath before he spoke again. "I want the three of you to go upstairs and leave me alone. I've got to fix this room." He spoke slowly. "I've been dying to make a few changes around here for years. Now go. I'll be all right."

"But Henry, I . . ."

"Up the stairs now—immediately." The door closed quietly. Sounds of furniture being scrapped across the floorboards again hit the women's ears, but it was more subdued, organized, controlled.

"Well, we might as well go," Bess said. "Now that we're reduced to the servant level, we can sit in the housekeeper's rooms. What ever happened to her anyway?"

"Henry dismissed all the servants weeks ago. Said they were a nuisance," Maud panted as she tried to keep in step with her sister on the stairs. Agnes magically brought up the rear.

**B**UT it's been three days. Are you positive he told you nothing?"

Bess carefully buttered another biscuit before she answered. "No, nothing. I met him by accident in the hall. I had left my book in the dining room and when I couldn't fall asleep, I decided to go down and get it. He was by the door. I noticed he had his hat and coat on and when I asked Henry where he was going, he just said, 'Out,' and left."

"I do hope nothing has happened to him." Worry created more lines on Maud's plain face.

"Brother Henry can take care of

himself—and that's for sure. I snuck a look in his room the other day and came across his accounting books. He has more little deals cooking on the fire than a short-order chef. Financially, we're in damn good shape."

"Don't use profanity, Bess. It's vulgar," Agnes sat back. "And I wish you hadn't gone into his room like that. If Henry wanted us to know about his affairs, he would have told us."

"What is this nonsense?" Bess' words were sharp. "I know I've been away for a long time and people do change—but I don't remember things being like this. Both of you are scared stiff. Of what? Of that shadow thing? Of Henry? You used to boss us around left and right when we were kids, Agnes. And since you were the oldest, you became a mother to us after Mom died. And now you jump if Henry so much as belches."

"Henry doesn't belch, dear," Maud gently reminded her. "But things are different. You weren't here when Henry threw William out. He was furious, and I've never seen William angry before. Both of them shouted at each other. Agnes and I weren't present, of course, but we could hear everything quite clearly."

"They were in the parlor. William cried, 'I'll never leave this house—never!' And Henry yelled back, 'We'll see about that' or words to that effect. Henry dragged William to the front door. It slammed and the lock was shot." Agnes folded her napkin.

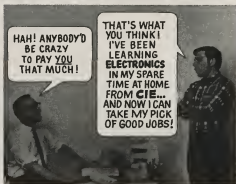
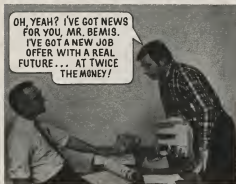
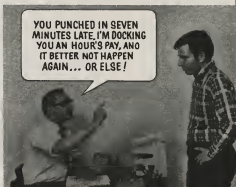
"And then after we heard of William's death—it wasn't consumption, Agnes. He was stabbed during an argument, but I didn't want you to know then. Following his death, we noticed that—that shadow on the wall. I don't care if you think I'm crazy—but it looks just like William!" Hysteria crept into Maud's voice.

"And I agree with Henry—it must be something in that room. Maybe the house has shifted and caused some sort of realignment of the moldings on the wall, or the floor is sinking something perfectly normal. But let us be off. There is still sewing to be done. We promised more patterns for the church bazaar next week."

The three ladies in mourning rose from the table and walked down the hall to the parlor. The sewing things had always been kept there ever since they could remember.



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At the entrance, Bess paused. "I think someone's at the door. I'll go see." She turned away and walked to the front of the house.

Agnes and Maud went into the room. A match scratched and the lamp was lighted.

"Now let's see, where did I leave those scissors—oh my God. The wall—there are TWO shadows!" Agnes collapsed into Maud's arms.

Bess staggered into the room, a telegram crushed in her hand. "A messenger," she gasped dully. "There's been an accident. Henry is—dead!"

THE END

## HELLFIRE MANSION

(Continued from page 20)

window I could open myself. All the others are a little warped and I have to use a crowbar."

"Sue, remember you said you were locked in the fruit cellar for two hours—when I had to deliver those pictures to Toronto?"

"Sure. I finally had to take the door off by its hinges—luckily there was a screwdriver on the shelf. I got out only a few minutes before you came back. But, so what?"

"Sue, there was no earthly reason for that door to stick."

"Don't be silly, Rick. This is an old house. It's damp in the cellar. Besides—maybe the wood swelled."

"Then again, maybe not. Maybe this house hates us and wants us to leave."

"I think you've been hitting the turpentine bottle again. I've told you time and time again, you're supposed to use it, not drink it."

"Very funny. But come upstairs, if you feel well enough. I want you to see what I've done."

"Sure. I feel fine already."

They climbed up and went into Rick's studio.

Rick stopped short. "Oops, I see where I've made a mistake. The paint's too thick. I'll just take the old palette knife there and . . . now I was sure I left it here." He rummaged through a pile of half-used paint tubes and jars. "Where the hell is it? Damn it, anyway. You'd expect with all this space I could at least find something."

"Maybe you brought it downstairs."

"No, I was just using it. And I left it right here." Rick pointed to a cleared off area on the worktable.

"Well, I'll go down and look anyway."

She clumped down the stairs.

"Oh, my God!"

Rick ran down immediately.

"Here's your knife," she said bitterly. "And look." She pointed.

Rick peered into her studio. "But—this can't be! Your rug—it's slashed in a dozen places!"

"With your knife."

"Honey, you don't think I did it."

"Then who did? The Man in the Moon? Maybe you're jealous. Maybe you made that tree fall on purpose so you could have time to ruin my work and maybe even kill me in the bargain. Maybe . . ."

"Get ahead of yourself, Sue! You're hysterical. Please, honey, calm down. Hey, I love you. I'd never do anything to hurt you."

"Oh, Rick," Sue collapsed into his arms, sobbing brokenly. "I didn't mean it. Any of it. It's just that I'm so upset. It was the nicest rug I've ever made. And now it's ruined!"

"Jesus—I smell something burning!"

He flung himself up the stairs. Flames from the studio had already begun to eat into the floor of the hall.

Sue came stumbling behind carrying a heavy pot of dye.

"Use this," she gasped.

Rick flung the water into the room, then ran down for more liquid dye. He and Sue extinguished the flames enough to be able to get into the studio. The pails of sand kept near the window for just that purpose soon put out the rest of the inferno.

He looked with blank eyes at the damage. Every single painting, study, model and sketch had been ruined. So was his equipment. He kicked a still-smouldering stretcher across the room. Sue came up behind him and gently touched his cheek. She turned and went downstairs.

Later he joined her.

"Are you thinking the same thing I am?"

"Probably, Rick. Let's leave."

"All right. I'll call the broker tomorrow. Luckily we'll only forfeit the deposit."

"And we can move in with my parents until we find another place. There's no use fighting it," she sighed. "It would have been so nice to live here, alone—just the two of us."

"Yes, but I don't think it would be worth the aggravation—and the danger. We could have been killed in that fire."

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"We'll have one, honey, some day for sure."

They ate a very simple dinner and went upstairs to bed. The events of the day had exhausted them both, and for the first time in their married life, they to sleep immediately.

SUE'S violent coughing awakened Rick. His nostrils took in a strange, almost familiar odor. He sniffed again as his mind raced ahead in an attempt to remember.

"Gas!" He shouted aloud. "Wake up, Sue—we've got to get out of here, Hurry!" He shook the sleeping form beside him. "Sue, Sue!"

One look told him his wife wasn't sleeping—she was unconscious from the fumes. He began to cough too.

Hastily putting on his slippers, he dragged the prostrate form to a sitting position. Slipping a hand under her knees and putting the other across her back, he tried to lift her—but hoisting the dead weight proved impossible. He couldn't get her from the bed.

Frantic now, he stripped the bed clothes from the mattress and as gently as possible, slid them and Sue to the floor. He dragged the human bundle to the bedroom door.

The exertion made him breathe deeper as his heart hammered within his chest—made him suck more of the lethal gas into his system.

"Mustn't faint now," he gasped aloud. Fighting the woozy feeling that threatened at any moment to envelope him into a death-dealing cloud of oblivion, he staggered down the stairs with his cargo hitting every step.

The beads of sweat felt icy against his brow. He grabbed a heavy alabaster ashtray from a table in the hall and heaved it at a closed window. A pane

shattered—the cold night air came in a little spurt—but it was enough to clear his head enough to function.

Struggling with his precious burden, he made his way slowly to the front door. He was weak and exhausted, he knew, but still the door should have opened. It didn't. It was stuck fast!

Coughing so hard the tears blurred his vision, Rick tossed a small chair, through another window. Tearing down a curtain, he wrapped his fist in it and finished breaking all the glass. Then he dragged the still-unconscious body of his wife to the opened window. Using almost all his remaining strength, he lifted her up two long feet from the floor and pushed her through the opening.

Just as quickly, Rick followed her. The night air quickly revived Sue. When she felt strong enough, they went down the road to seek help.

"The only gas we have is for the stove," murmured Sue dully.

"But the house was originally lit by gas. The fixtures had been removed and the openings were capped. But the pipes were still live—I checked them last week in the basement. I guess they must have sprung a leak."

Sue stopped on the dark road and turned to look at her husband. "You mean to say all the pipes developed a leak through the whole house? At the same time?"

For the first time, Rick felt cold fear knife its way down his spine in the face of an answer he dared not give. "I don't know what I mean. I just don't know."

Once more Sue turned back to look at the house just before the bend in the road cut off from view.

"It's laughing at us, Rick." She began to sob hard. "It wanted us to leave!"

THE END

### FISHERMAN'S DEVIL

(Continued from page 25)

the girl concentrate on it. And in a soft, gentle voice, he began to hypnotize her.

"Your eyelids are heavy; you wish to sleep; rest, my child. Let your mind wander about this stage. Sleep. Sleep."

Nancy's head began to droop and in spite of her own wishes, she experienced the not unpleasant sensation of drifting away to a half-sleep. As she explained later, "It was as if I were another, separate person who was able to see Sambi

talk to a girl who looked just like me. I was awake and asleep at the same time."

Sambi started asking her questions: "What made you bappy today?"

"Seeing Roger."

Up in the audience, the young man smiled.

"And sad?"

"A little puppy that had been hit by a car and was lying by the roadway."

"And frightening."

"That thing—that Dance of the Fisherman's Devil!" Nancy gasped and tried to get up.

Sambi's arms reached out and sat

her down. Smiling quickly, he brought her out of her terror almost before the audience realized something was wrong. He blandly continued the rest of the act, ending it with the traditional order to immediately raise her arms the moment she came out of the trance.

He clapped his hands and Nancy found herself with her arms high over her head. The audience laughed at her dumbfounded expression. Sambi gave her two free passes for the next day's show, and the assistant escorted her off the stage.

Later over coffee, Nancy and Roger were in the middle of a semi-argument.

"And I say he's a fake. Mumbo-jumbo, arise, o spirits of the night," Roger did a pretty good imitation of Sambi's odd diction.

"But you saw the levitation thing as well as I did. And when I was up close to him, I could remember what he said while I was up there."

"You mean right after the Devil's Monkey?"

"Yes. It was something like 'Victory'—and there was another sentence after that but I can't remember."

"It was probably, 'Jeez, do I have to go to the john,' or something."

"It's easy to see that you're no romantic," Nancy laughed. "Are you worried that he'll ask me to go for a camel ride and you'll lose me for good? No chance of that happening—I'm yours for life."

"Well, let's hope so." He gave her a hearty kiss, oblivious to the stares of the other customers in the coffee shop.

**I**N A dingy hotel room, quite another scene was unfolding.

"I am the greatest sorcerer of modern times and I must possess it!"

"Calm down, for cripe's sake, will you? I don't want us busted out of here."

"I, the famous Sambi, demand it."

"OK, OK. Brother, after a while you'll even have me believing you got super powers, Fred."

"What, my very assistant doubts me. I..."

"I know. An uncle on your mother's side knew a few slight-of-hand tricks from Iran. You tell me that story about twice a week. Calm down and have another drink—here."

Sambi knocked the proffered glass from the other man's hands. It smashed against the wall.

"Knock off that noise, damn it."

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prostrate Roger.

"Nancy, snap out of it. Get hold of yourself and untie me. Quick!"

The terror-stricken girl once again did what she was ordered. Roger leapt to his feet and shook Nancy as hard as he could.

"Snap out of it, honey. We've got to get out of here!" As quickly as possible he helped the weakened girl to the stairs and then out the building.

The cold night air soon revived Nancy. "Oh, Roger, it was horrible," sobbed the girl as she clung to him. "Sambi knocked over a bottle of water or something and suddenly that thing he was carrying began to twist and squirm. It came alive—the eyes opened. It was so terrible, it brought me out of my trance."

"Not just water," Roger's voice was hard with fear. "Both of you went into the laboratory. Sambi must have spilled a flask of saline solution—salt water. It makes sense—fisherman's devil. It needed salt to become alive."

"What's going to happen?"

"I don't know. But I pray Sambi's powerful enough to handle it."

A hoarse, blood-curdling scream broke the silence, followed by another, then another after that. A deadly calm—a moment later, weird, high-pitched laughter more terrifying than any mortal noise.

The building began to shake.

"Hurry—hit the ground," Roger threw Nancy down and covered her with his own body.

The stones in the foundation seemed to dance and spin for a fraction of a second—then an explosion that lifted up the night, a deafening boom that left their senses reeling, and falling bits of wood that stung their scalps like a million needles.

Silence. Roger looked up cautiously. Directly in front of them lay a gigantic crater, still smoking. Not a sign of the building or even that there ever was one—except for the huge hole.

Nancy began to sob. "I don't understand," she managed to gasp.

"Thank God neither do I."

THE END

## SELL MY SOUL TO SATAN

(Continued from page 29)

Of course, I learned all this later. That night, I shakily took my place next to Joan in a rear "pew." A few minutes later, one of the men I'd met earlier came down the aisle with a tray-load of cups.

"Take two," my companion instructed me. I did, and handed one

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to Joan. We both drank the stuff inside. It tasted funny—but it worked fast. A hazy glow spread over me. Almost immediately after I'd swallowed it, I felt that I was floating—floating free of everything including all my repressions and normal living itself.

WHAT FOLLOWED DEFIES description. A "high-priest" came out. A light shone on him. Behind him came a woman. She was nude—and I recognized her as the wife of a grocer in town!

I didn't know the high-priest. I hadn't met him before. It didn't make any difference. He began by leading the woman to a couch. She reclined on it. He turned to the "audience" and began reciting mumbo-jumbo formulas and filthy parodies of prayers.

Whatever drug was in my drink had worked well. I listened—and, instead of being horrified or revolted, I listened raptly and even felt my pulses pound.

"We call forth the powers of darkness," the voice intoned. "We are releasing ourselves from the false beliefs of the world and exchanging them for the true pleasures of the evil gods. . . .!"

There were more, many more, such fantastic lines. "Altar boys" came out. They sprinkled and "anointed" the nude woman on the couch. The watchers were beginning to strain in their seats. An air of electric tension filled the room.

There were insane songs and chants—all of which built up the rhythm of the tension.

Then, with a wild, triumphant howl, the "high priest" threw some herbs on the fire glowing in the brazier. I caught a brief glimpse of him as he stalked over to the woman on the couch—and then the lights went out, leaving the room completely black, save for the faint, cherry-gleam of the coals in the brazier.

The people around me went wild. It was as though a dam had suddenly burst. Raw hell coiled and swirled. There were screams and groans and shrieking laughs. Joan flung herself on me.

Liquor, marijuana, drugged drink—everything inside my stomach spun. I shoved the panting girl away. Sick, trembling, I staggered into the aisle. Joan followed me as I groped my way to the door. She clutched at me, yelling for me to stay.

"Get away from me, you witch!" I roared, hardly knowing what I said.

Her fingernails raked my face and neck. She shouted oaths and curses fouler than anything I'd ever heard in my life—and I'd heard plenty!

I got to the door and opened it. Then I staggered out and went

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through the empty rooms upstairs until I found the one I'd been shown earlier. I got my bag and took it out to my car. Joan didn't even bother coming after me.

"Then go, you —!" had been her parting shriek. "Go. But you'll never go far enough to get away from me!"

That happened in my town last year. I saw it with my own eyes, felt it with my own senses. I understand it's still happening there once each month. The cult has over 100 members and almost everyone in the know has heard of it.

And now it's my turn to wonder. When is my punishment going to occur? Sooner or later, I know that it must come. For there is definitely some form of communication between the witchcraft groups of the entire world. They are aware of me. They've told me so.

My job takes me to places all over the world. And still, whether it's the most backward spot in the world or the most civilized, I know that I'm being watched. Sometimes, when I turn my head suddenly, I can see an old woman smiling evilly at me. And once, in New York City, I caught an enchantress in the very act of sticking pins in a doll, a doll that was dressed in a piece of my own clothing.

She didn't complain or threaten me when I caught her. She just shrugged her shoulders.

"Today or tomorrow!" she sneered. "What's the difference. Sooner or later. The mark is on you."

**I**N PLAIN self-defense, I've had to take steps for protection. I've spent a lot of time and effort since, checking up and learning what I could about the prevalence of witchcraft and demonology and all the various types of dark cults in the United States.

There's no exaggeration in the statement that the man or woman who lives next door to you may be a witch or a sorcerer. I don't say that they can really perform magical feats or conjure up spirits or commune with the Devil. That's a matter of belief—and I don't believe that they can.

But they can use the Black Mass and Black Magic as vehicles for depravity and orgies. And they do!

For every single one of us is directly menaced by this invisible society. Even without being aware of them, we can become the object of their wrath.

For example: Did you gain a promotion last month? Did you close a big deal? Did your son marry that lovely girl who had several other suitors? Does your neighbor envy your lot, your wife, your children or your job? Does anyone at all have ANY REASON AT ALL, to dislike you, to hate you, to despise you, to envy you, or to want you out of the way?

One of them, almost certainly at least one of them, is connected in some way with a witchcraft group. At the very least, he or she has heard about such a group and can wrangle an invitation to attend.

After that, trouble can dog your footsteps. Shadows can peer over your shoulder as they do over mine.

For there is no defense against it. Believe in witchcraft or not, it makes no difference. The church has never found a method that can prevent witchcraft. The law, using extreme severity—as for example in the world-famous Salem trials, has not wiped it out. And no one has ever found any workable prayer or medicine to halt an attack by witches.

Only by surrendering to the Black Circle yourself, can charms of safety, spells of protection be woven. And that entails a complete surrender of mind, of body, of spirit and of soul.

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A devil-worshipping cult meets regularly in a loft building in San Francisco's Marina district. Omaha isn't a big city as cities go, but I learned there were two groups there—both of which were often visited by members of the cult in my hometown!

Sure. I know. This is the 20th century. That's what makes it even more horrible!

Take that girl—that one over there—just getting into the convertible parked at the curb. She looks like a normal, healthy, typical American young woman.

She may be that—and just that. On the other hand, she could be anything. Even a devil-whisperer or a witch—or simply a dizzy, bored female who got mixed up with a hell-cult for kinks.

There are tens of thousands of them...

THE END

## CURSE OF THE VODOO GOD

(Continued from page 31)

progressive nations in the world. Pierre wanted the same development for his own people. Knock out superstition, and one would be able to instill technology and pride in a people still many ways primitive.

Nine o'clock came and Pierre dismissed Claude for the night, then turned on the lamp. He was still bending over his work when he

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was interrupted by a slight noise.

"Who's there? Come closer—I can't see you."

"It is only I, Father. Here, I've brought you your dinner." A lovely girl of twelve came forward, placed a tray on the desk and kissed the cheek of the harried official.

Pierre's face crinkled into a warm smile.

"So much like your mother, my dear. I wish she were here to see you now. She would have been so proud."

"Perhaps, Father. But how was your day? You work so hard and I'm worried about you. I do wish you wouldn't put in such long hours."

"Not enough time, darling, and so much to do. Now run along. I'll be home before long." He got up and walked her down the stairs, said goodbye, and closed the outside door.

Walking up the stairs, Pierre was left alone to finish one of the endless tasks that was ever-present before him. Twilight descended into full night and the world around the small, mayoral office grew still and quiet. Only night noises could be heard—the sound of moths knocking against the barred shutters of the room, a drunken man softly singing to himself as he staggered home from a night's carousing, the tide slowly shifting out to sea again.

A floorboard creaked. Pierre glanced up quickly.

"Odalie, is that you? I'm sorry I took longer than I . . . Who are you? What do you want?" Pierre stared at the wild figures standing before him in the dim gloom of the overhanging gas jet.

One of them moved forward so that the light made an unholy arc about his head.

Pierre Duprez," he announced, rather than asked.

"Yes, I am he. But what do you want? How did you get into my office. I thought I had locked . . ."

"Never mind that now." The outlandishly-dressed man glared at him. "Beware. Do not seek to anger the gods with your foolishness. Leave our temples and holy places in peace—and we promise to let you alone. Otherwise—here!" He tossed something on the desk. And just as quickly, he and the others disappeared into the gloom.

"Wait—I want to talk to you!" Pierre jumped up from behind his desk and went to follow the circle of four figures. But when he breathlessly reached the door, there was no one there. And it was still firmly locked—from the inside.

"What foolishness—thinking

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they can sway me by sheer trickery." Annoyed, Pierre walked back to his desk to examine that which the leader had so contemptuously thrown at him.

"Just a doll, and not very well made at that," he murmured, holding it gingerly between thumb and forefinger. He carefully dropped it in the wastebasket.

"I've certainly my work cut out me—especially when it comes to dealing with people like that. Oh well, it's time to go home anyway."

Putting out the light, he left the office and walked the few blocks that separated the office from the large house he shared with Odalie and an aged housekeeper, the only servant he could afford on his slim pay. Pierre almost hated to go inside. It was such a beautiful night. Now cool, it was as if the hot, dusty day had never existed. And the full moon shone brightly on the bay, creating fantastic light pictures on the gentle waters. Pierre sighed softly, turned the key, and went inside.

**"SWEET JESUS, misericordia, Domine. Oh help me, please! Help! Help!"**

Pierre automatically flung on his dressing gown and padded swiftly in his slippers to his daughter's room. He was met at the door by the housekeeper who was trying to elicit an answer.

"Open up, bebe. 'Tis only I, Ma cher. And here is your papa, too. Open the door, sweet." The woman turned to Pierre. "The door is locked, monsieur."

"Odalie, Odalie!" He stepped backward and lunged forward with his shoulder. The lover gave with the weight and began to splinter. He lunged again and was tossed into the room by the impact. "Come, my darling, awake."

The child lay in a half-shredded sheet that gave an indication of an unrestful sleep. Her face was almost as pale as the cloth itself.

"Get some water, Annette. Hurry!"

The servant ran out of the room and returned in a second with an ewer of the cooling liquid. She carefully bathed the fevered girl's brow, cheeks and throat. Pierre hovered nervously in the background.

"How long has this been going on?" he asked through clenched teeth.

"Every night since we first came to this damnable village, monsieur. I did not wish to bother you, and

"Here, she is coming out of it!"

"Oh, Papa!" The girl clung to her father.

"There, there, dearest. It's all over now. You were just having a nightmare. Annette tells me you have been having them every night. I should have been informed of this."

"It is nothing really—only this night it was so vivid, so real that I was sure I would never be able to escape."

"Escape? From whom, dear?"

"From them—from those horrible people who want me to bow down in front of their gods."

"It's this place, monsieur. I told you so before. But of course you wouldn't listen to me. I'm only the servant around here and naturally my . . ."

"Enough of this, Annette." He rose from the bed. "I am still very angry with you for keeping this from me."

"I told her not to say anything, Father. I didn't want to bother you. It'll stop soon and I won't be seeing those dreadful dolls."

Pierre felt his throat constrict. "What dolls, dear?"

"The ones they keep giving me to hold. Ugly things made of feathers and bits of fur and wood. They keep wanting me to hold them upside down. And when I refuse, they threaten to kill me."

"It's just a bad dream," the mayor said slowly. "And like all dreams, it will pass. Now go back to sleep, dearest."

He tenderly covered the child with a blanket after he and Annette had put fresh linen down. Kissing his daughter, Pierre left and motioned to the servant to do the same. They paused for a moment to talk outside the closed door.

"Have that panel fixed in the morning." He returned to his own room where he too spent an anxious night troubled by recurring fantasies of the most terrifying sort.

**"I KNOW** it's not very diplomatic, but it's got to be done just the same."

"But the Sacred Grove, monsieur? Surely we can find another site for the new playground. Perhaps on the other side of the town?"

"The other side of the town, Claude, runs right into the jungle. It is unsafe for the children. I want them to be happy and healthy."

"The *papalots* have always used that place for their most solemn sacrifices to Obi. Haven't you angered them enough by burning down their temple?"

"Claude, I'm not doing this out of

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At last . . . we have THE ACTION FILMS! They used to be blurry, over-exposed, detail-obscured and only available for viewing at private clubs, smokers, stag parties, or bachelor parties. The cost of these 'action films' was also too high for the average fellow to bear. NOW . . . YOU can buy REAL 'action motion pictures', that are TRUE in full-quality-of-detail. These films ARE different, because they have been produced from the GENUINE ORIGINAL MASTERS, in FULLY EQUIPPED, MODERN MOTION PICTURE, FILM LABORATORIES. So . . . you get CLARITY! AND . . . at reasonable prices! The lowest and MOST reasonable prices ever offered for "THE REAL McCOY"

Our PROFESSIONALLY PRODUCED 'action motion pictures', are BURSTING with SENSUAL excitement! They are a collection of RARE and EXCLUSIVE 'action motion pictures' of guys and gals "working" together, to bring you many extended hours of viewing enjoyment. All this hearty 'heat', can be yours to permanently own, and view in the privacy of your own home.

This brochure shows you portions of these "EXCLUSIVE" 'action' motion pictures. These selected 'frames' of the films, are only 'teasers' of the real thing. Think of it . . . actually owning 'truelife', 'ACTION MOTION PICTURES', going 'full-blast' on your own silver screen RIGHT in your living room or den. AND . . . if you like being popular, and enjoy sharing your fun with others; your friends will flock to your house, once you let them know what you have to show.

NOW . . . WHILE THEY LAST . . . GET THESE MOST RECENTLY PRODUCED 'EXCLUSIVE FILM RELEASES!'

We are stocked now . . . and we are ready to give you immediate delivery, directly to your home. Your shipment will arrive in a plain sealed wrapper. Please enclose a \$5.00 deposit with your order, if C.O.D. shipment is desired. TO ORDER, YOU MUST BE OVER 21 YEARS OF AGE!

NOTE: Some of the participants may wear Face Masks or dark Glasses to protect their identity but their inhibitions end there!

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- ☐ ALL 12 - 200' Films ☐ Color \$150 ☐ B&W \$85
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**DEPT. MM-1**

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sheer spite. Why should the best pieces of land be reserved only for heathen rituals? It's more logical that things should be used for the majority of the people, not just a few. Correct?"

"This was in this morning's mail, monsieur," Claude said in lieu of an answer. He placed the packet on the desk and left the room.

There was no postmark on the wrapper. Pierre lifted it, opened the seal and dropped the contents onto his blotter.

Another doll, much like the one that found its place in the wastebasket—only this one was horribly twisted and contorted as if having suffered a terrible calamity.

"Monsieur, monsieur!" came a cry from the street.

Pierre recognized Annette's voice. He sprang from his seat and raced to the window.

"What is it?" he called to the distraught figure waving its arms wildly on the street below.

"Come home—there's been a terrible accident! It's Odalie!"

Pierre felt a knot gather in the pit of his stomach as he raced down the stairs and joined the servant.

On the way to the house, Annette panted out the story.

"I told her not to go . . . said it was too dangerous . . . wouldn't listen to me . . . jungle . . . bitten by a snake . . . very ill."

Pierre bolted ahead of the woman. Reaching his house, he flew up the stairs but was met at the door by the town physician.

"I'm sorry," the man said, gently placing a hand on Pierre's chest to stop him. "There was nothing I could do to save her. The poison had already entered her system by the time I was called."

"Recordate, Jesu Piae." Sobs stopped the rest of his prayer and he collapsed into a fit of weeping. Annette came to lead him away. She too was sobbing bitterly.

The doctor continued his speech to Claude who had followed master and servant home.

"It's the strangest case I've ever seen. The poor child's neck was torn to shreds—you'd better not let the father see her in this condition. Call the undertaker immediately."

"It's weird." He turned to face Claude at the door. "I've never known any snake to kill its victim like that. And yet it was definitely a snake—there were fang marks and the venom had dribbled down until it reached her hand and collected into a puddle in her palm. But I don't know of any serpent large enough on this island."

Claude let the doctor out and closed the door. Sitting on the first step of the stairs he lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply, and smiled secretively.

THE END

## LETTERS

(Continued from page 36)

Dear Sir:

I am a regular reader of your magazine and thought that the following might interest you in your letters column. It's not very much, I guess, but it *did* happen, and was told to me by my father who experienced it personally.

When a child, he was on a picnic on an old estate in Germany with his step-mother and father and a younger sister.

While his parents were sleeping after the picnic lunch, he and his sister wandered about the estate toward the big mansion or castle that belonged to it—which was empty and falling into decay.

Suddenly, a distance up the path, they saw a woman who kept waving them back—telling them, as it were, not to go any farther.

My father said he was never able to swear who it was, but claimed that the figure resembled his mother; at least she wore the blue and white print dress he had often seen his mother wear before she died.

In any event, the figure was so startling that he and his sister became frightened and ran back to their father and step-mother. When his father investigated the path leading to the house, he discovered an enormously deep chasm, so covered with weeds and dead grass as to be almost totally obscured to the casual eye. It was apparent that if the children had walked on, they would have fallen in and possibly been killed or gravely injured. It was only the appearance of the "Lady in the Blue and White Dress" waving them back that saved their lives.

An exploration of the house proved nothing, of course. It was empty and falling apart. No sign of a real person was apparent.

R. Lortz  
THE END

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